

PELLAFINO



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What the critics and readers have said about Christopher Cardew's earlier books:

**My Kingdom for a Dream,
The Legend of the Cross.**

"It has freshness and charm and moments of rare beauty combined with sensitive insights into the inner life of the spirit." *Rhodesia Shield*

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This unusual, fascinating and gripping para-space fiction story flips through time and ether with the speed and ease of thought, physical, mental and ethereal, subtly switching in pattern and style to mould about each change in environment, never leaving the reader uncomfortable whatsoever the role he is called upon to see and feel.

The story is of a young boy who meets a dolphin in a cove in the south-west of England and, feeling a strange rapport with this denizen of the deep, enters the water to find they can converse in thought patterns and pictures.

Later, far out at sea, dolphin and boy are drawn to seek and find a rift in pulse to an alien planet of Anti Matter, the *alter ego* of our present world. A swift transition, and both become as they really are: the dolphin a graceful young woman, the boy a young man.

They move on to see and experience life on the Pacific continent of Lemuria, as it could have been on our own earth many milleniums ago, almost in fact to the birth of Man.

These traumatic events are shown to them in three ways: through the heightened and extended sight of the beholders; in some part by an unknown celestial guide; but mainly by participation and experience in the events of which they themselves were once a part.

This book carries with it the rhythms of sea and space, time and no-time; rhythms which prevail even through a tremendous storm after escaping from the sinking Lemuria, through death, tragedy and life, and through the journey back to our planet, and a thrillingly related fight to the bitter end between the dolphin and three hungry sharks.

The boy lives; the dolphin dies — or does she? From the subtle pen of Christopher Cardew is born this remarkable book.

By the same author:

My Kingdom for a Dream
Legend of the Cross

PELLAFINO

CHRISTOPHER CARDEW

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The angry sea raged and lashed at the base of the dark cliffs far below from where I stood and watched; while I — though sensitive to my thoughts — gazed half-mesmerized at the rhythm and pattern of their heaving mass. The sea's steady roll and thunder filled my ears and senses, easing away the sharp edge of a lonely pain which was besetting me, drawing me closer to the pulsing heart-beat of eternal Life.

Yet this pain was only a sensitizer and prelude to a day I can never forget; its every detail living with me now, my memory indelibly traced, etched sharp and clear. But, perhaps above all, I hold most closely the memory of Pellafino — my dear friend and love, and my close comrade for just one wonderful day, and once again thereafter.

Pellafino, old and tired; but not too weary in spirit and flesh to take me far out to sea; to show me reality; to talk, and to tell me about so many new and fascinating things. We conversed in thoughts through the easy medium of his strange and patterned speech, moving serenely and swiftly from one subject to another; but always clear and simple, for his idiom far surpassed the clumsy limitations of our languages, leaving me with pictures of crystal clarity of all that

passed between us: pictures of the past, the present and the future; pictures drawn from the pristine realism of Life — Life as it truly is before Man ever drew a curtain between God and himself.

I was only a young boy on that very special day of the most memorable Summer in my life; ten or eleven years of age, unscarred by the World, and innocent and clean of its wiles and vices. Yet I felt pain most keenly; a bullying and clumsily thrusting pain, nebulous in source, but incisive in that it seemed to forewarn an excision from my homes in thought and ways of living. Indeed, my very inability to see and understand its finite causes and reasons, while feeling its weight, somehow only made the pain the sharper, and me the more desperate to escape its stinging tendrils.

Now, with the passing of many years, I have learnt through Pellafino to read more deeply into Life; as I can also recognize more clearly the origins of the pain I felt that day, more able to express something of its meaning in these verses:

*Stay close to me, Lord,
For I am now on Earth;
Here, alas,
Where I can scarcely hear the whisper of your
words.*

*Naught do I list, in fact,
But the hollow, empty clamour of the World,
The perennial hustle of life,
And the rush of men's minds as they seek
Only to bend their business to their will.*

*Here truth is lost,
The delicate crushed and forgotten;
While I? I am pressed back in pain,
My mind's sensitive fronds
Battered by the coarse tunes of Earth
And the crude and wayward purposes in Man.*

This coastline — in the far south and west of England — was of dark and craggy cliffs, carved and indented by aeons of pounding Atlantic rollers, broken and cut back to the bare rock of nature, hard and unyielding; though smoothed at their base by the ceaseless caress of the sea, and the not infrequent battering storms which swept these shores.

Time, the corroding sea, the wind and the weather, had long since worn away any dross of pretty finery. None the less, to the seeking eye, there was a rough and savage beauty moulded into this rocky grimness in the forms of bays and coves, and underwater caves that gurgled and rushed with the ebb and flow of wave and tide, slowly forming the adamantine rock into intricate grottos deep under the heavy mass of cliff which towered above — stark, but bleakly impressive with its sharply-swept lines and jagged walls.

But more special to me than any of these caves — or of any part of the shore which I had explored — was a rather remarkable cove of my own discovery: well hidden, and girt about by solid weed-slimed rock, there was only one narrow underwater entrance, scarcely more than a yard or so in diameter; thus, in normal weather, the deep water in this cove was placid, almost limpid, surging gently up and down to the pressures of the moving sea; while even when the

weather was wild and stormy, the rollers huge and thunderous, disturbance within this cove was minimal, and that created mostly by tremendous sheets of spray as tons of hurtling, angry sea smashed against its trembling barrier, falling over and on to the enclosed waters in the cove, whipping its surface into white foam, and wavelets which ran this way and that to clash in pointed spumes, before sinking into hollows when they had spent their little strength.

I made my way down to the cove; scrambling, crawling, but sometimes able to walk carefully by passable, although precipitous, routes which I had learnt well a year or more before. The day was brisk and clear with a middling, fitful wind from the south-west; while the sea rolled in a heavy swell, its waves curling over almost languidly to smash on to the hard, bare rocky base of the cliff — its surge and heave a mere lullaby to its more tempestuous moods. So I found that the water in my cove was only rising and falling gently from the subterranean pressures through its entrance, notwithstanding the roar and crash and the quickly sucking drag of shingle as, in serried lines, the waves built up to grandly hurl themselves against this natural fortress to either side of me.

I sprawled on my stomach and looked deeply into the water, heedless of the weed-slime and damp. Clear, greeny-grey water as it rose and sank soothingly to the slowing, soporific lilt of my mind.

I gazed and dreamed, listening to the steady surge and suck of the sea as it bubbled with a deep, hollow resonance through the narrow entrance to the cove, driving and drawing the growing seaweed in graceful whorls and patterns; while above my head flocks of

gulls wheeled and circled tirelessly, their sad, piercing cries echoing off the dark, striated cliffs in a weird medley of eerie and uncanny music.

I cannot say how long I lay there with the warm sun on my back, watching the rhythmic movements of the enclosed water as it eased away the tensions in my mind; when, without warning, I became aware of a powerful swirl and surge by the underwater entrance to the cove; and then of a dark, slate-grey shape which had entered, to swim round and round slowly, and — I thought — rather tiredly.

Very soon the water became too disturbed and dimpled for me to be able to catch a clear sight of my visitor from the great ocean that lay outside my cove; but then, a moment later, the creature broke surface with a deep sigh, a powerful whistle of plumed-spray from its back, a sucking gulp of clean air, and my quick glimpse of a bright and intelligent eye. Then again it disappeared beneath the surface, curving gracefully in an arc with a final glistening flash from its U-shaped cross-set tail.

'A dolphin! a bottle-nose dolphin!' In that short, sweeping space of time I had recognized my visitor. Feverishly I hastened to tear off my sandals and shirt; then slid down the rock on which I had been lying, landing heavily in the water that reached to my chest at that point, momentarily gasping as the cold snatched at my breath.

I knew quite a lot about dolphins; but most essentially that they were friendly to people, and that their intelligence very likely equalled — or even exceeded — our own. Even so, my reactions were so very prompt and decisive — unguided by what I knew, or by any pre-determined thought — that they were

almost instinctive; and this was curious, for the dolphin was large and powerful, and could very easily have been made dangerous by fear through its captive state in the cove.

But such logic meant nothing to me in that moment; for I had felt a strangely magnetic pull from the second I had caught its eye, an invitation so strong that my young mind — still close to Life and nature — responded immediately to act without thought.

I stood as still as I could in the water, shivering slightly in its icy grip, my feet lightly planted and my legs well apart to counter the effects of the gentle currents on my nearly weightless state. Once, twice, three times the dolphin swam round the small cove, drawing nearer to me each time; its powerful flukes driving it forward easily and smoothly, thrusting at the water so that I felt their buffet as the dolphin passed close by.

Then, approaching me again on its fourth time round, the great creature stopped, turned in the water with the grace of a sea-gull in flight, and rose silkily from the sea to face me, not a yard from where I stood, uttering a series of plaintive clicks and whistles; while from its back there shot a powerful jet of plumed vapour, accompanied by the same deep sigh, the whistling, and the sucking gulp of air.

For a moment or so we faced each other, and for the first time I knew the brush of fear — or was it awe? From the many-toned squeaks and clicks I understood the dolphin's mind as clearly as if its thoughts were tangible, so powerfully projected was the message: "Come with me, little friend; come with me in love and I will show you many wonders; do not fear, come with me."

I was slow to recover my wits, too slow; for just as my hand left my side, and about to reach out nervously to the dolphin, it cast me a look of sadness and pathos, before sliding gently beneath the surface of the water, leaving scarcely a ripple, only a few small whirlpools which spun to the surface from the powerful twist of its body and tail.

Round and round, round and round my cove went the dolphin, its smooth course broken only at intervals by the same sad tune of its breathing. Again it began to draw closer to me each time it passed, slower and slower; until, at last, so leisurely and near that the smooth hide ran lightly against my legs.

In that second of contact all fear and doubt fled from me as if it had never been. I reached out a hand and felt along the dolphin's back, over the streamlined body and dorsal fin, my fingers rubbing on the soft but tough hide; then more reflectively along the old scars from the wounds and wear of a long, long life — all the time absorbing thoughts and impressions that filled me with wonder.

'A female dolphin, old beyond her normal span; a soul alive and keenly aware, but a body worn and tired; a sagacious mind on the path of Life, vibrant with warmth, with love, with loss.' Then her giant muscles rippled gently as she thrust at the water and slid on past me; leaving me with a dream, an old memory being stirred and awakened, and her name — 'Pellafino'.

She swam on round and round, round and round the small cove, her light grey back undulating as she rose and sank in the rippled pool.

"Pellafino" — I said the name softly to myself, rolling its sound thoughtfully around my mouth before

letting it spill from my lips. "Pellafino — Pellafino": the name tugged at me, pulling sharply at both my heart and memory buried deep in lives past. "Pellafino", I said more loudly, trying out its resonance and sound; while all the time my sluggish, earth-bound spirit was reaching and stretching out and back, far back to the days when Man first walked this planet in a state of innocent perfection, my memory's path illuminated ahead of the road I trod; illuminated, but narrowly, so that I sped back between walls of darkness, hearing only the essence of the call which beckoned me on and on, seeing nothing of the breadth and foundations that had given my past, our past, its real life and glory.

Then, suddenly, as with a lightning's bolt, I saw the beginning: "Pellafino!" I cried out loudly, and launched my body into the deeper water and towards my friend who was still swimming serenely round and round. I saw and felt — without reck or reason, without detail or colour — that Pellafino and I were as one from ages past, though in a sense I could not begin to understand. How and why? I did not know, nor did I care; all I knew was what I felt: a past kinship, and a long-suffered emptiness by her absence from my life.

I floundered towards Pellafino, my shorts dragging in the water and hampering my movements. Then I lost sight of her, only to feel the smoothness of her body slide by me and stop on my right a moment later, so that my arm fell naturally on to her for support, and I ceased to struggle.

For a while there was stillness, peace and a sense of utter bliss; not even the sharp bite of the cold water affected me, nor could I hear the sounds of the

sea-gulls crying and screaming overhead; while wave, wind and weather became little more than a lullaby to the immersion of my mind, my heart, and my soul.

Then Pellafino stirred, and began — like a giant battery releasing its current — to pour out energy from the immensity of her own vibrant mind and self, and with it a truly phenomenal range of musical squeaks and clicks. I listened, able almost perfectly to understand her tremendous mind which was so nearly one with mine; I absorbed her strength and attuning influence, so becoming more nearly one with her in her element of the sea, more adaptable to the cold, freer in the water, and better able to contain and hold my breath, filling and conserving in my lungs the very prana of Life, enabling me to use its stored energy to the fullest.

This was a miracle of transformation; although not one which was apparent, for my body and outward appearance were as they had been before. Only I knew that I was different — at least for the time — and in a way which was subtle and hard to define beyond my vastly increased aptitude to my watery environment.

In a sense, too, Pellafino's thoughts and mine were united; although, again, in an intangible and quite indefinable way: for not only were we of almost one mind in our present ability to understand each other, but also into the shadowy and mysterious past which I could not see, but which I could sense in her memory and her deep wish to take me back.

I knew what I had to do; so, without further delay, reached out and caught hold of the base of Pellafino's dorsal fin with both of my hands.

Slowly and gently she began to move, while I adjusted myself as best I could to the smooth

undulations of her body. We went round the pool once in a full circle, before I caught my breath as we dived and glided down towards the entrance to the cove; down and through its narrow aperture, and so finely and skilfully did she pass it that I never even brushed the jagged, urchin-encrusted walls — and this in spite of its constriction and the strong currents which swept through, first one way and then the other, and with quite terrific force.

I felt no fear nor any unusual discomfort, only the newness of my environment and my analogous state to it. Pellafino took me through the dragging surf and into the waves, and I joyed at their contact, thrilling to the violence and pull of the crashing rollers and dragging undertow.

But this turbulence did not last long, and we soon passed through it and on out to sea, with a rising and dipping motion that seemed — without breaking Pellafino's aqua-stride and rhythm — to slice us under the climbing, curling waves, perfectly timing our upward arcs for air in the dells and backwash of the rollers as they swept towards the shore.

I felt so alive and keenly aware in this new and denser medium of the sea, learning very quickly how and when to breathe in and out as we rose and plunged, until soon this, and other natural bodily functions, were accomplished with an ease which has since surprised me. I learnt how to streamline my body to the varying surges and currents of the sea, and to the graceful movements of Pellafino as she thrust her way on and on, out to sea and away from the land.

Pellafino was old and tired — this I had picked up from her thought transference. Nevertheless, a lifetime of swimming and living in the sea had

developed in her body huge muscles of soft steel, so that I felt and sensed the thrum of her carefully contained power, eased in its output for the sake of my weaker state, and able to tow my slight frame through the sea for hour after hour at the comparatively modest speed she was making.

The further we moved away from the land, and the deeper the water became beneath us, the easier grew the rhythm of our progress; since here — on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean — the sea heaved and swelled more grandly, its currents scarcely crossed or disturbed by up-thrusting beds of sand, silt or rock.

I had no idea where Pellafino was taking me, nor how she was going to show me what she wished; but neither in that moment did I greatly care. Indeed, my trust in her sprang from sources so deeply ingrained that I have yet to see its parallel between any two people here on Earth; consequently, in the there and then of that time, I felt no fear, nor even the slightest trepidation, as we drove on into the heavy seas; only — as the long sea miles fell behind us, and as the minutes passed into hours — was I conscious of a growing tiredness, especially in my shoulders, arms and hands.

I shifted my grip to ease the strain and avoid the first twinges of cramp, my body stiffening slightly, becoming less resilient to the pressing sea and Pellafino's almost lilting undulations while in motion.

In a flash she sensed my state and swirled to a stop, sending me shooting over her head before she was up with me again, uttering plaintive squeaks and clicks in her concern. Her thoughts leaped in a brilliant series of pictures, quite inexpressible in their fullness and when put into the brevity and limitation of words — in fact, from then on I expressed myself to her mostly in

the translucid language of thought, finding this simpler and fuller by far than the best efforts of my clumsy tongue.

Pellafino rose up beside me, and I gratefully threw an arm over her body, letting her bear my weight while I relaxed my limbs. Thoughts flashed between us; although slower than before, and in a more relaxed vein: thus I learnt that we had not much further to go.

I looked about me as we lay nearly dormant in the heaving sea; but could see no sign of land, not even when we were lifted up by the highest waves. We must have travelled a good distance, hardly less than twenty miles; and I wondered at my newly-adapted state that was able to take such punishment in cold water, and over such a distance, before really beginning to feel any severe strain.

But, even as I waited and rested, renewed strength and vigour presently began to flow back into my body, coursing like fire through my torso and limbs to their furthest limits in my fingers and toes. I knew, of course, that this energy and attuning to the sea poured from Pellafino, and I hoped that my needs were not proving too great a strain on her own stamina and reserves; she showed no signs of distress, save perhaps in that she lay so still and quiet in the water. Yet, subtly, I sensed in her complete relaxation a gathering-up and absorption of strength for us both; not just for the last aqua-steps of our journey, but also for travel in some other form and through some other medium.

Presently Pellafino stirred, so that I — receptive to her lightest thoughts — knew she was ready to continue the journey. Once again I grasped the base of her dorsal fin with both hands, and once more we

purred forward out to sea, picking up speed and rhythm, until soon we were racing along, creaming through the heavy swell far faster than before; alternately snaking easily under the pressure of a wave; then bursting from its leaning back-swell to fly through the air, girdled in brilliant, sweeping spray that flashed and scintillated in the bright rays of the sun; before curving back in a graceful arc, to plunge into the next moving, rolling giant as it bore down upon us, its remorseless power outwitted as we slid beneath its ponderous mass.

I felt an urgency thrum through Pellafino as we sped on as fast as she dare, and I knew we had to make up the loss in time to keep faith with some mysterious assignation that lay ahead. Nevertheless, I managed to adapt myself to her increased speed without too much difficulty, flowing lithely with Pellafino's swifter undulations; even finding time to think what a strange and unusual sight we could have been to any mariners in the vicinity. However, we had no observers; not even a distant smudge of smoke on the horizon marred my intermittent scan of the limits of sea and sky all about us as we dipped and rose, dipped and rose, the sea tearing at my body, dragging at my light shorts — which I would have done better to discard, and so smooth the flow of wave and pulling water.

For a while this rhythmic sensation of travel, strenuous though it was, lulled and filled my mind to the exclusion of all else. Then, gradually, I became aware of a sense of mystery that seemed to impregnate the very sea through which we rushed; a sensation which strengthened with every passing minute, tingling and teasing at my senses, filling me with

anticipation and just a tinge of fear.

Yet Pellafino gave no sign of anything unusual being apparent, but swam on towards the heart of this sea of auric power, her even pulsations neither weakening nor varying one whit; in fact she was evidently abstracted in a way I found most curious; though at the same time her underlying calmness, strength and purpose allayed my timid fears, while my perceptions were sharpened until they became as the twinkling points of a thousand needles.

The feeling that we were approaching some source of tremendous power grew on me steadily; only I felt that this radiant power was in some way in antipathy to our present states; odd, though in no way a fount of evil; a power in reflection and counter-balance to this World, and not yet able to work or truly live in union or peace with the split branch of Life which supported us.

Pellafino began to slow down, and then to squeak and click quietly as she circled widely; apparently pin-pointing her bearings preparatory to searching for some particular spot in the wide ocean — while I followed in complete submission to her whims in movements, my body and legs trailing forlornly in her wake.

My own mind, hypersensitive to the presence of some foreign state, was vibrantly alive and aware; although puzzled by something I could in no way understand, or even begin to grasp. My thoughts raced under these new sensations and pending conditions; for I felt a strong yet subtle pull on the whole of me: not away from Pellafino, nor even, in that moment, away from the World in which we lived and swam; but rather an internal pull which provoked

every atom in my body; a feeling not so much of disruption, but of rearrangement — an inversion and reversal of myself.

Time passed as Pellafino narrowed her circles; and, as it passed, I became less and less aware of the waves and the weather, the sky and the scudding clouds: these things — all things of the World — were being pushed back so that I became barely conscious of their presence; knowing only Pellafino and myself as we swam on slowly, questing, searching for something in ever-tightening arcs and loops, something I did not know, drawing nearer and nearer to the source of this strange emanation, this alien limb of power.

The closer we drew inwards, the further from us fled the World; until only the sea was our constant companion in the coming transition which I sensed — though even this was changing colour from a greeny-grey to a rich, deep blue; yet, unlike any blue or colour that I have ever seen on Earth, this was a living colour, to be absorbed as a vibrant and deeply impregnating impression, translucent, and with a purity and depth which would defy the finest efforts of earth-bound nature to emulate to any close degree — its nearest comparison being the iridescence of a humming bird, or that of the most deeply vivid and beautiful wing of a butterfly.

Then it happened, without any immediate warning, and quite beyond my scope of comprehension at that time; almost, in fact, beyond my powers now to describe crudely, even though I was later to learn something of what had taken place.

Perhaps at this point I should diverge, and attempt to make some explanation of what actually happened to me then when I was a child. Those readers who

prefer to continue with the story, and who have little interest in Science and its phenomena, can of course skip this brief explanation and continue with the story.

* * * * *

There is a little-known phenomenon known as Matter and Anti-Matter, to which I doubt there being anything I can add to current scientific knowledge, however precarious its establishment; for even though I slipped through a time-split area twice, once out and once back, I was not given much insight into how this transformation occurred. Life's purpose with me was not to reveal the comparatively mundane workings within the first four or five dimensions, but primarily to reveal the past for reasons which you, my readers, must decide for yourselves.

Only very rarely does Life lay out any part of its mysteries so that they are plain and simple to read; and beware when she does, for then much is expected from the recipients. Normally, mankind must seek out, reach upwards, and follow with higher thought and determination our finest needs and instincts. There are many roads to God, many paths back to our source; but all, in essence, call for these qualities from each one of us if we are to dare and firmly tread the way: the way of refinement through work and daily toil; refinement through simplicity and humility; refinement through wisdom and knowledge; refinement through elevation and deprivation; refinement through living for, and giving to, others; refinement through frustration and suffering; refinement through the hell of life on Earth while we stretch to reach above

its tenure; refinement through absolute and undeviating faith and loyalty to God, our goal; and, finally, refinement throughout ourselves, so that we may become fit to receive the grace and nobler gifts in Life, to rise above our mundane states and chains in nature.

But, to return: it has long been known by Adepts in the Far East, that there is an opposite World to our own; in alliance and yet antithetic, so that — under natural and conforming circumstances — there can be no visible communion between them; yet at the same time the two planets are interdependent in so far, at least, as their ordained relationship allows a life-giving flow of reciprocating energy. This other counter-balancing planet can be compared with ours — in a fashion — as to the plus and minus poles of any battery; or to the alternating current in our mains electricity which continuously change from positive to negative, and from negative to positive: the positive cannot meet with the negative, nor the negative with the positive; but there are moments during change when a negative cycle becomes half positive, and a positive cycle becomes half negative — it is during such moments in the transition of power between the two planets that translocation can occur.

However, we must also understand that the greater natural movements in Life pulsate with a slower and grander rhythm: thus, while the alternating current in electricity vibrates at fifty or sixty cycles to the second, its moments in transit being minute; yet the cycle of power on an interplanetary scale is correspondingly far slower, though no less perfect in accuracy and balance of movement, its time in transit being more extended to us from where we stand, and from our own viewpoint in the scale of time and vibratory waves

in movement.

Now, let us raise these simple, organic facts to a higher level; or at least as far as we can appreciate these same fundamental actions from within the highest to the lowest. All Life is flow: movement in vibration, movement in oscillation, movement towards change and growth — be it up or down on the scale. All created Life, from the mental and intellectual to the material and physical, is subject to, and governed by, rhythmic patterns of compulsive movement. Nothing can stand still, save only in final and complete death — and this is the Law; the Law of God and the Law of Life, which are both one and the same.

This eternal Law — while varying widely in rhythm and pattern — is very easy to observe in the material and more directly controlled pulsations of Life into nature; such as the growth, decay, and regrowth of plants; the finely balanced cycles of life in the sea and on the land; while any reasonably interested observer and reader can perceive the precise patterns in the movements of heavenly bodies within and beyond our solar system.

Man alone is different (or so we judge in our cupidity) in that he has been given freedom in spirit, mind and action: Man is free to rise or to sink; he is free, in a sense, to pursue and capture for his own the higher and more ethereal vibrations of the spirit; as he is also free to follow the cruder and lower vibrations of nature — vibrations which lead eventually to death and decay. Man, therefore, can be subject to a wide spectrum of patterns in vibration within the eternal Law, even at one and the same time; so, ostensibly, is the Law in Man flexible, harder to perceive and define from one person to another.

Yet, in fact, God's Laws are immutable: thus Man — apparently paradoxically — is subject to them in the final analysis; for while Man has the choice to choose his destiny, Man has not the choice to avoid the final consequences of his choosing should he choose corruptly, weakly and foolishly.

Finally, it should be observed that there is a distinct and clearly defined barrier between the cyclic vibrations of life and death, and those of resurgent Life alone: the first lie outside the bounds of pure spirit, either by decree or by the laws of nature, or simply by their inability to adjust and refine to the progressive demands made upon them by Life; while the second lies within these same bounds, heightened by wish and will to a state where there is no dependence on the laws of nature. Or, to define this barrier in another fashion; the first comprise the emanations of spirit in material form; while the second is the ever-living emanations of spirit in spirit form.

Christ has bridged this gulf for us in His teachings, and in His Crucifixion and Resurrection; and Man — if he is to live — must also step across this barrier of fire.

And so to return to my story.

* * * * *

For a momentary space I was afflicted with a sense of utter darkness, total and complete; and in that space and darkness I was conscious of an almost instantaneous change which took place throughout the whole of my make-up; a complete reversal of all the components which comprised my physical self,

even to the wave patterns in my mind. In poor comparison and imperfect analogy; it was as if I had been patterned to pursue a course in one direction, and then — in the twinkling of an eye — turned about to find myself following a new and opposite way. Strangely, however, there was no apparent change in myself other than this subtle reversal of my inner physical and mental patterns: I thought the same, I moved the same; while, as far as I could see, I looked the same.

Furthermore, as Pellafino and I switched from one molecular structure to another, I became conscious of an intensely strong antipathy and revulsion towards the World and its ways; so strong, in fact, that we were instantly hurled out into space with enormous force and at tremendous speed; indeed, so fast that we seemed to pass the sluggish movements of light, perhaps even reaching to the ultimate speed of thought. But, in truth, I have no way of really telling; for after the first flashing moment I was not conscious of speed, only of immediacy.

However, to attempt to write of these experiences — with the paucity in content of mere words — can, of necessity, only strip the reality down to a few insubstantial bones that we may recognize and know, and even these bent to suit our varying tastes and degrees of advancement, their sum at best no more than a thin and cold veneer of the reality; for we have no yardstick here on Earth whereby to measure or record such happenings, events beyond the experience of nearly every person, and no language adequate to encompass their dimensions, being, as they are, beyond the bounds of our three-dimensional lives, and therefore lying in the realms of fictional fantasy.

I knew that Pellafino and I were travelling fast and far; yet I was only conscious of our transition — not of speed, nor of time, nor even, in a sense, that we were moving at all. As on the breath of thought we sped on instantaneously through what I knew was the single realm of time and space, and, as instantaneously, found ourselves swimming as before in a sea of deep, translucent blue, the same as I had seen and experienced briefly when approaching closely to the vortex and limb of that strange foreign power — only now this power was no longer foreign to me, for I was one with it in harmony and tempo.

* * * * *

For a while we swam around in ever-widening circles, Pellafino towing me behind her as before, but drawing away from the vortex of alien power from my World which we had left, and assimilating my new environment, finding it in all material appearances almost exactly similar to that part of my World from which we had just been drawn so abruptly.

The only difference of any consequence was in a subtle spiritual and mental radiance which I sensed encompassed us about; a feeling of being entirely at home in a positive state of living colours which soothed away any fears that could otherwise have arisen in my mind. These impressions became stronger as we circled away from the magnetic force we had just left, and as they grew stronger, our circles wider, my memory faded, blurring over the pains and loneliness of the past, until they became merely a timeless factor of what had been, a slice from the past written in flat, cold letters without hurt or sting.

Soon we were free; free from the alien pull which had sucked at us; free to swim towards the shore which I could just discern as a rich haze in the distance.

Pellafino leaped forward through the deep blue water, her thrusting progress hurling aside vivid sparklets of broken water, shining for a moment in the golden rays of the sun, curving in beautiful symmetry, then falling back in small flat swirls of whitening foam, to be left behind and quietened in the vastness of the heaving, rhythmic sea.

On and on we swam, the distant shoreline drawing steadily closer and clearer to my sight, the dark cliffs appearing exactly like those I had left behind on Earth — though not forbidding and menacing, but rather purely magnificent in their stark beauty.

Time passed, and once more I began to feel my limbs and body ache and tire under the ceaseless pressure of flowing water, and from the slim but dragging weight of my flexing, streamlined body. Yet I was determined to give no sign of my distress, and even shielded my mind from my increasingly wretched and painful state; for I was drawn to those cliffs, drawn to the little cove I knew would be there, anxious not to waste even one moment of Pellafino's onward, surging progress in my excitement of stepping on to land in this other World of lovely thoughts.

So I hung on and drew on my last reserves of strength, flexing my body smoothly and gracefully — nearly as well, in fact, as Pellafino's own — to our undulating movements through the shortening, choppy waves and violent, sucking currents as we drew nearer to the land and the rising sea-bed.

My brain became hazy under the strain I had

imposed upon myself as I fought to relax, to hold on to Pellafino's dorsal fin, and to hide from her sharp and perceptive mind the extremity of my physical distress. So dazed did I become, that I was scarcely conscious of our last wild plunges through the curling, crashing combers as they roared in under the cliff; nor even of Pellafino's easy, sliding dive through the opening of our cove, and into the comparatively tranquil water which lay therein.

There, at last, I let go; slipping almost helplessly from Pellafino's back into the misty green water of the pool, far too exhausted to do more than flounder feebly towards the slippery rocks which — all around — formed a firm bastion against the power and violence of the slamming sea outside.

Dimly, I was aware of a tremendous swirl and surge as Pellafino, realizing my state at last, spun about and rose strongly under me, catching and lifting my body to the surface and the air. Gasping, I let my arms fall over her body, relaxed and allowed my head to drop on to her's. As in the distance, far away, I heard Pellafino's agitated squeaks, clicks and tuneful whistles; while her thoughts shot the air all about me like rays of dazzling light — thoughts of love and recrimination.

I smiled in my mind — 'Poor Pellafino; she was berating me for my stubborn folly.' But I was too tired to think back; besides which I was basking in her admixture of love and anger in spite of my distress, almost expecting to be picked up and soundly spanked for my naughty behaviour.

Soon, however, Pellafino quietened, lying still in the gently rising and sinking water as I reached convulsively for air and rested as best I could, barely

conscious of the echoing cries from the flocks of sea-gulls circling and wheeling overhead against the rugged walls of the cliff.

Gradually my breathing eased; although I still felt desperately weak, with a sick fever running through my body as it sought vainly to draw on reserves which were no longer available. Helpless tears coursed down my sea-wet cheeks in my extremity and frustration; so that I was unaware that Pellafino had been sidling slowly up to a low rock on the cliff-side of the cove, and only brought to its attention when a bump on my thigh distracted me from myself and my sorry state.

Where now was all that lithe strength which had enabled me to be towed through the seas of two Worlds? Painfully I raised my head, aware only of the awful effort required to perform even this simple movement, and saw that Pellafino had brought me up against a nearly flat rock, its edge not more than a few inches above the high-surge line of the enclosed sea in the cove.

I watched as each wave roared slowly in to curl and smash against the indomitable rocks along the base of the cliff, and knew that we were subject to a cyclic advance and regression in nature. A wave would hurl in its ponderous weight, the spray leaping high in the air immediately after its rolling, thundrous impact, while the sea built up in compression against the shuddering walls of our cove, its pressure such that the water was thrust forcefully in through the narrow entrance, lifting us eighteen inches and more on the bulge of its suppressed energy. Then, with its power shattered, it crumpled in broken disarray, gathered speed in retreat, and hissed and whirled back in wild, bur ordered defeat, hungrily sucking at the water in

our cove, the quantum in loss restrained only by the very narrowness of the underwater entrance; until, to the tuneful dragging and shuffling of watery feet, the wave's beaten and flattened power was caught under the maw of the next rising giant; which, with grand and mighty strength, began the cycle again by hurling itself to break in confusion against the jagged, time-worn granite of the cliff.

As the sea swelled us up, I saw that I could roll from Pellafino's back and on to the rock with the minimal amount of effort. Yet, even so, my remaining strength was tiny, and it was not until we had sunk and risen three full times, that I felt ready and able to call on this final effort from my exhausted body.

Up and up we rose, the weed-slimed rock thumping and sliding against my legs and thigh, while I trembled inside as I gathered my resources, not knowing whether I could make it or not. The water's lifting surge became slower and slower, until it stopped altogether, and I could see along the rock. It was now or not at all, for my mind was growing numbed and hazy: letting go of Pellafino — just as the water was turning and beginning to slide away — I put out all that remained of my enfeebled strength to twist, throw my body, and roll over on to the rock.

The manoeuvre was easy and simple enough; still my reactions and movements were so slow and leaden that — had it not been for a timely thrust from Pellafino — I would undoubtedly have slid back down the rock face with the sucking water. As it was, she must have sunk and turned like lightning, caught my body as my fingers slipped on the smooth surface of the granite, and pushed me firmly upwards and well on to the flat, dry stone.

There I lay when I had rolled to a stop, my limbs sprawled untidily and uselessly, unable even to straighten myself; while at the same time the first conscious twinges of real fear plucked at me in my utterly helpless state, and in the realization that Pellafino had not been able to recharge my strength from her own, as she had done twice before when in the World we had left behind — had not, in fact, even tried to do so.

Consciousness drifted from my tenuous grasp, leaving only a part of my inner mind dimly aware of vague and terrifying scenes brought to bear on me in my weakness. I could only endure them, cringing back into myself and watching, knowing their warped distortions, but quite unable to influence their twisting paths, as — incomplete — they wavered at last, then fell away to a light touch on my shoulder.

At once peace and stillness flowed around and through me like a river, catching me up to swing safely in Pellafino's arms, drifting gently into a deep and restful sleep; safe now, always safe with Pellafino.

* * * * *

'Pellafino! arms?' I knew I had slept well and was rested, drawn back at some indefinite moment in time by that touch on my shoulder. 'But Pellafino was a dolphin! how, therefore, could she possibly have arms to hold and lift me away from the horrors and terrifying scenes of indefinite shapes and flaccid unreality?'

In my dream I looked up, and saw before me a girl of about my own age: slim, her rich brown hair blowing in a silent wind, with eyes of a deep and dusty

blue, and a smiling winsome face, lightly freckled about the nose But I cannot describe her, not the real her, for I saw immediately with the clear eyes of my inner mind that this girl was me; yet not wholly me, but one with me; my other half in fact, no less.

My heart leapt to her, and her's to me; and in that moment we recognized, and we both of us knew, a completeness one with the other; a single self which far surpassed our child's states; a knowledge of ourselves both young and old; a knowledge which — although separated throughout aeons — left us untarnished and whole as one, richer and more complete than before.

She came towards me and took my hand, for her's was the purer state, and Life thrilled within me as we looked into each other's eyes, and I held and held, insatiable in my need, and filled with an unbounding love and tenderness.

Then she spoke; at least I think she spoke; for in reflection now I cannot be sure whether she — and later I — spoke in actual words, or whether we communicated in thought. All I can be certain of was that her tone was pure melody in my ears, her thoughts more clear to me than my own; so that in those first moments, as indeed during all our brief time together, we communed with perfect ease and grace. None the less, I must try and give some meaningful semblance of what passed between us — though, Heaven knows, I fear I attempt the near impossible: for if words were spoken, then the thoughts behind them were swifter and greater by far; and if words were not spoken, then what hope have I of expressing the fleeting fullness of our thoughts in direct speech? Yet I will try, at least in part.

"So you know me now," she said softly, smiling radiantly; although I felt there was more to her thoughts than their first impact revealed and implied. "I am Pellafino," she went on; "I brought us here so that we may reunite together as one and again know ourself for a short space, and also that together we might search something of our past and cleanse it of any impurities; for very soon our two Worlds will be caught up in power and change which will bring about upheaval, death and destruction; as well as Life to those who know — blindly in faith alone, or otherwise."

In the blink of an eye my mind spun, and I wondered; then blurted out — "But who am I?"

"You are Peter," she replied, moulding her form to mine; "Peter is your real name, though not the name you use on Earth, and you are mine, and I am yours, and together we are one; so it has been from when we were born, and so it will be for ever."

I could not help it; fleeting doubts and questions arose and flitted through my mind with the speed of light, and, as quickly, were answered — though not all of them. Thus I knew that many, many years ago we had been parted due to an act of stubborn folly on my part: Pellafino had taken one road, and I another; yet, even so, I knew that my path had been predestined and was one with purpose and object, as valuable to our united soul as was Pellafino's own.

I knew, too, that we were close upon a time of strife resulting from the open release of terrible evil, to be followed by our reunion for a long period; but also that this culmination could only be brought about if I rose clean from the purging fire.

Furthermore, I knew that Pellafino's road had given

her easy access to a broader spectrum of Life in reality — to the past, to memory, to the future, and to knowledge and the use of power. Whereas my own road was cloaked in darkness and struggle, from which only the best and finest could rise deserving to rise.

These things, and many more, I knew as Pellafino clung close to me; her words or thoughts spinning an easy web for me to follow.

Then she moved away, and my heart was hot for her, though I still held her hand in mine. "Come," she said, "we must go, for we have much to do and see. But first let us clothe ourselves in the maturity that we are" — and so saying she raised her other hand before her perfect child's body, and mine too.

In that moment of change in myself, I was only conscious of my fuller, adult and mature figure in the prime of life. But when I looked towards Pellafino, whose hand I held, I gasped in amazement: never before had I seen anyone more lovely and perfect; yet, even so, it was not her face and form which truly held me, as much as a brilliant radiance emanating from her whole being which shone, uplifted and complemented my own vibrations more perfectly than I can ever describe.

"Oh, Peter!" she murmured, reading my thoughts like an open book; "you are just as beautiful to me as I am to you; how could it be otherwise when we are so nearly one? and how could I be beautiful and pure at all without your own thoughts to make me so? But look down, for we must go."

I looked as bidden, though I found it hard to take my eyes from her even for an instant. I looked, and saw my poor huddled child's body from our own

World, lying unconscious as Pellafino had thrown me from the surging water in the cove, pale and taut, my legs and thigh scratched and raw from the scraping of the rock. Then I looked beyond into the enclosed pool of rising and sinking water for any signs of my dolphin, still scarcely able to believe the wonderful transformation which had occurred.

"Peter, I am here beside you," Pellafino whispered in my ear; "there is no need to look into the water to find me."

Shame-faced, I turned back to her just as she slipped her warm hand from mine, and knelt beside my wretched outworn little body as it lay so forlornly on the rock under the great, gaunt cliff — "What are you going to do?" I asked; though I knew the answer even as I asked, and spoke no more from my confusion at being caught off-balance.

"To restore life and vigour to your Earth body; we cannot leave it thus, or it will die, and you with it," she replied. Then, placing her hands on my child's shell, one on the forehead, and one over the heart, I became immediately aware of waves of energy flowing from her own super-abundant store into that small frame of mine. Under my eyes, as I watched, I saw my body relax, the pallor leave my skin, and my face assume its usual healthy hue.

"There, it will come to no harm here," she said softly, rising to her feet and turning to face me again. "We must go now, for the evening of Life draws near. Come, take my hand."

Even now I was not fully sure what Pellafino meant, though I took her hand most willingly. For a moment of bliss we merged as one; then parted as her eyes smiled warmly into mine — "Poor Peter; you've had

hard lives in the World, and seen too little of the manifestation of power we worship as God. Have no fear; from this moment we must travel swiftly in the ethereal realms of spirit — but I will be with you all the time."

Her close presence and unity with me was all I could ever wish, so I laughed happily as I answered — "With you the unknown can hold no terrors for me. I am ready."

Once again I could not discern any moment of change: at one and the same time I was standing at the foot of the great cliff, loving Pellafino to the tremendous music of the crashing waves, and — though not at once and together — flashing on the wings of thought through the dimension of time and space, her hand in mine, and her radiant presence sending out more numerous thoughts than the stars in our galaxy, and more instantaneously than the passage of light.

Time was nothing to me, less than nothing, since I could not feel its weight at all; but then neither could I feel the rush of our transition, and nor was I burdened by the speed of Pellafino's thoughts. About me was reality; I was reality; indeed, and in truth, I was free and absolutely certain of my state — conditions which none of us can fully experience on Earth, wrapped as we are in the cramping confines of our bodies, and further crippled by our very finite minds weighed down under the millstone of Sin.

Knowledge poured into me, awakening my sleeping memory, revealing all that I had learnt in ages past, much of the present, and some snatches into the future: a veritable confluence of Life and myself. Thus were the first shafts of Light beamed into my mind,

and thus was I able to equate that which I was to see and later learn with my own past experience and accumulated knowledge from lives lived and states known.

Such lucid revealment could not have been given to me while on Earth; for the dark pall of unbelief weighs too heavily on the flickering souls of mankind, while the atmosphere is too dense for clarity, and the burden of evil too great to allow for more than a weak diffusion of Truth and Light, the materialism so deeply founded in grossness as to bar the flights of finer power. So Pellafino, who knew the secret of translocation from the one World to the other, had brought us here where we might be free to see clearly and in true perspective, and to travel far and wide in our freedom and unchained states.

So it was with boundless speed that I was able to receive the knowledge which flowed into me; my dormant — but vast and experienced past — absorbed it all as would a dry sponge with water, easily and with no strain at all. Likewise did I learn anew the patterns of Life: from Pellafino, from the many confluent storehouses within myself, and from the Divine Light which shone all about us.

My difficulty was not in learning and knowing then, but rather in imparting to others now — even to a limited degree — some small part of what I knew and was to learn. Words in themselves, however numerous and skilfully phrased, can do no better than act as a very drab and ineffective medium when used to try and penetrate the vast realms of reality; for we must realize that there is a dense barrier between the state of Man born of Nature and on Earth, and that of Man born of spirit and above the drag of earthly ties; just as

there is also an equally impenetrable barrier between the air of negativity which always clouds the outcome of human wisdom based only on its own structure, and that of the ethereal states of reality which lie above us and from which some amongst us sprang.

Now I cannot help but sigh at the enormity of some of the task that lies before me, which, even with the finest and most strenuous efforts I can give to it, offers little hope that I will successfully impart any single facet of my knowledge in its absolute fullness; nor, in fact, to achieve much more than to place guide-lines in the hands of my readers. Length is of no particular aid in such a task, so I will not waste further words.

We came — Pellafino and I — to what I can only describe as the Memory Banks of Life; or, to what is better known in the east, as the Akashic Record. Here we looked back in time to the beginning of our World, and also to the beginning of that other World which is our counterpart; and I saw, with some surprise, that the two Worlds circled the same sun, and that everything on them was essentially the same, yet opposite in motion in a way I did not fully understand, but which had the effect of allowing an interflow of energy — very much on the broad lines which I described earlier. I saw also that while one World was dark and negative, the other was Light and positive, interchanging polarity — as far as I can translate — about every seven thousand years, or a multiple of that number. Furthermore, due in some way to their opposite polarity and vibrations, neither World could ever be in sight of the other; largely, I think, because they were spiritually and physically antithetic.

Yet beyond these opposite relationships there was a subtle, underlying and controlling spiritual factor; a

state in ruling poise which I had understood well enough when I had the full use of my greater mind in the Halls of Memory, but which has since largely eluded me, save — here and there — for elusive fragments that come and go.

At this moment all I can broadly and truly say is that Man has it in his power eventually to control and master the swing from Light to Darkness and Darkness to Light; for this is a state in origin which, in a sense, was created by ourselves from our almost total dependence on nature and things material; thus initiating a situation which in one aeon throws us into darkness and dismay, and in the next lifts us to touch on the fringes of reality — but only to be cast back again when we become spoilt by the glory around us in the inadequacy of our littleness, so crippling our ability to rise and become a living part of the Light.

All of which, doubtless, sounds very intransient and vague. Nevertheless — as I said earlier — this law we have brought down upon ourselves is not fully clear to me now at this time of writing; for while the fullness of knowledge through thought may be assimilated and understood while we stand untrammelled and unburdened in our greater minds, yet its enormity outweighs our finite and limited state while on Earth — thus we can only touch on its hem, and some few strands reached in dreams from time to time. Even so, that which I have written — fragmented though it may be — is clear before my sight; as it also remains clear to me that Man can only defy and nullify this law by rising above it, by accepting and living fully the teachings and patterns of Jesus Christ, and by forever striving upwards so we may surpass and govern the law which hangs like a pendulum of lead around our necks.

We watched, flitting swiftly through the millions of years that lay like a dark cloud between the beginning of the World, and the day that Man first trod its surface. I watched, refreshing my memory as the scenes spilled and passed before my eyes. We saw — some two hundred and fifty thousand years ago — how Man had been settled on this Earth of ours in a state of purity and perfection; but weak in his cleanliness, since he had not yet been subjected to any adverse pressures to test his strength — utterly destroying Darwin's popular theory of Man's beginning in a primitive state.

We saw the World — our two Worlds — in a different guise; since where the Pacific Oceans now cover more than a third of each of the two Globes, then there were Continents lying like great jewels from the northern reaches of the seas to a little below where the Equators lie.

I drew nearer to Pellafino as my excitement rose, looking up briefly and smiling into her eyes, before again turning my attention even more fully on to the changing vistas before us: for it was here, on one of these two roughly elliptical Continents, that Man had first entered into the unspoilt Garden of Eden.

Pellafino leant forward and guided the scenes from a touch of her mind, drawing us closer, speeding nearer to the rich Earth below. Still I was conscious of the two Worlds for just a short time longer, equal in all ways, but scarcely aware at that stage of their difference, and not even knowing which of the two filled the scene before our eyes: for although there was an interchange of energy, yet there was no actual antipathy between them beyond that which was purely physical and necessary to the movements of power; both were spiritually fair of face and filled with Light,

but only one was populated by Man in the beginning — though I could not discern which as they were so alike.

As the changing vistas before us swept our visions across the Continent, I absorbed with lightning speed the thoughts and emanations thrown up from the Earth and its peoples below. So it was that I recognized the southern part of the Continent as hot and damp, clad in tropical vegetation, and populated by a dark-skinned negroid race; unrefined and not at all advanced, but at least simple and straightforward in their ways of living, and in their slim grasp of the great unknown which controlled — in this way and that — every facet of their lives from the benign rulers of the north.

The central latitudes of the Continent were something of a no-man's-land, and a natural barrier between the north and the south; sparsely populated by a hardy, lightly-built brown-skinned race scattered widely over a vast region of land reaching from coast to coast; their natural boundaries encompassing a desert, flanked on its west by a range of active volcanic mountains towering high into the air, and reaching further westwards for about fifty miles before dropping abruptly into the sea. To the east of this desert the land was at first flat, hot and semi-arid, rising gently into rolling wind-swept hills on which grazed cattle, sheep and goats; and from thence into another range of mountains similar to those on the western coast, but narrower, and sliding more gradually down to the sea and some fine coral reefs.

Although the whole Continent was ruled from the north, the rule was easy-going, gentle and benign, and kept in balance by the vast central hinterland — to the

north and west by its great areas of uninviting desert and nearly impassable mountains, to the east by dry and barely arable land on rolling hills, and to the south by huge regions of fetid malarial swamps that crept up to the very edges of its own bleak landscape. The black inhabitants of the south were content with their own lush tropical lands, while the people to the north had all they wished from their own rich, well-watered soils and temperate climate.

Then only the north swept into our view, and our pace of transition slowed immediately — though still far beyond any natural person's reflexes to absorb. Here, in comparatively leisurely fashion, we dawdled over the country from east to west, and along its sea-girding shores to the north. The air was imbued with a sparkling crystal clarity, the land mostly rich and green; while the people themselves were very fair to look upon, clad in loose flowing robes of varying colours, refined, graceful and innocent of wile and deceit.

We drew closer still, and saw that their homes were made of wood and stone, simple in design, but open and spacious as befitted the temperate climate and the character of its people. Instinctively I drew in my breath deeply, inhaling the emanations which rose like nectar from this new and perfect land and its first children; yet, strangely, buried within the purity of these impressions I discerned a certain weakness, festering as the seeds of trouble for the future.

As soon as I had inhaled and absorbed my impressions, the scene blurred before my eyes, receded, then whirled like a spinning top, the years fleeing by so fast that not even Pellafino and I — in our highly refined states — could pick out any details,

or follow any but the broadest lines of their regression and decay.

When one moves in a timeless dimension, the very concept of time itself becomes extremely difficult to envisage; thus, when the reeling scenes before our eyes began to slow, I was left barely conscious of its passage, only of the changes in scene and atmosphere: consequently, I can only say with truth that the years which had fled before our eyes were at least several thousands in number — ten thousand? perhaps fifty thousand? or perhaps more or less than either of these speculative limits?

What we felt beneath us now was vastly different to that which we had so recently been shown. Fundamentally, the land appeared to be much the same; although its pattern had been scarred considerably in the north by mine dumps, the burgeoning population, and by many of the uglier aspects of modern urbanized living. But it was the peoples from all parts of the Continent who were most changed: gone was the air of innocence and purity from the fair people of the north; gone, too, was most of the simplicity of the negroid people in the south; while, nipped between the two, only the brown men of the dusty, rolling grasslands and arid plains had managed to retain anything of their culture, individuality and strength.

In a shimmering instant I saw and recognized the changes for what, and how, and why they were: the white race of the north had been gifted with greater intelligence and ingenuity than the less practical peoples of the central hills and the south; over the long years these northerners had twisted and warped their worship of God into something resembling a

self-serving ritual, enslaved what negroes they needed for their mines and other tedious work, ravished the land of its precious minerals, and created from their cleverness and industry such advanced wonders as to make our own nuclear age of the twentieth century appear as archaic to them as the humble bicycle is to us.

In the air flew circular planes of widely varying sizes, but all of the same basic pattern — that of two saucers, one inverted and placed upon the other. These machines flew with no sound other than a very faint whistling hum, which I could just hear whenever any of them drew close to me, and appeared to be capable of achieving almost unlimited speeds nearly instantaneously, or of hovering quite motionless wherever their pilots wished.

I could hardly help but be fascinated by these incredible inventions, and with my interest the scene altered rapidly, so that I saw one after another, each as wonderful in its own way as the last: lights that glowed brightly with no heat at all, and from no apparent source; ships of such sophisticated shapes and designs that glided with speed and ease over or under the oceans which surrounded this great Continent; telemetric equipment so refined that they were able to operate and transmit solely from the thought waves of the sender — the list was endless, and my wonder boundless at these people who had lived such a very, very long time ago.

Yet withal there was an air of degradation, depravity, corruption and dismay that hung darkly and listlessly over the whole Continent like a heavy unseen cloud; furthermore, there was some mystery to the scene as it passed before me, some unknown factor

without which I sensed an incompleteness.

Pellafino and I swept lower, passing swiftly through one scene and on into another, from one building to the next and from room to room; drawing in the atmosphere of the Continent and its people of the north, and thereby only increasing my impression of something being absent, some sustaining force.

Whatever it was, I was very soon to learn the answer; for at length we were led towards, and drawn to enter, the most magnificent building we had yet seen. Constructed from huge marble slabs, yet so gracefully designed that it seemed almost to float in the air, it was surrounded by strange and powerful rays which affected us even in our time-split states. Deeper and deeper we penetrated into this building through the eternal Halls of Memory, until at last we drifted into the inmost room — an octagonal hall with a domed roof, its floor of black marble striated with mystical patterns in white, the walls a creamed white mottled rhythmically in subtle greys.

I was never sure of what I expected to find at the heart of this amazing building: possibly a mass of complex instruments manned by fair northerners, acting as a central agent for most of their physically sophisticated inventions? or perhaps some thrumming source of energy supplying the nation's wide needs? In point of fact what we did find was more surprising and shattering than anything my wildest imaginings could conceivably have conjured up.

The room itself was bare save for a huge round table made from some liquid green semi-translucent substance, and set not much more than twelve inches above the ground. Around this table were strewn huge cushions on the black marble, and seated on these

cushions, or standing and walking about in deep thought, were eight giants — none less than nine feet in height, and all with dull blue skins.

The shock was so tremendous to me as to cause the scene to waver momentarily; but then I felt Pellafino's hand squeeze mine, and with her comforting contact I fell back within myself and watched once more as an onlooker, and less as a disturbing participant.

I looked more closely at these eight men; each one perfectly proportioned, each of tremendously high intellect, and each wrapped in varying patterns of vivid auric power. So forceful was their impact on me, that even the blueness of their skins and gigantic proportions were lost and swallowed up in my wonder at such men, the like of which the World has never seen before or since.

I knew in those moments that these eight men were the last of a race of giants, and the brains and true driving force behind all the incredible inventions being used throughout much of the Continent; an advancement which had, in its own insidious fashion, brought about a drift away from God, away from Truth, and away from their original purity of mind.

At some instant, as I watched and wondered, there sprang into my mind a passage from the early part of Genesis, Chapter 6: 'Giants lived on the Earth in those days, when first the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, and by them had children; these were the heroes whose fame has come down to us from long ago.'

Piece by piece the jigsaw fitted together; but only occasionally in any of the patterns by which we — in the Twentieth Century — are often misled. I saw, with both Pellafino's sight and mine, that these supermen,

these giants and progeny of angels and the daughters of men, were not of evil minds nor filled with any evil intent; indeed, rather were they the victims of their disparate forebears: brilliantly equipped, their minds almost visibly scintillated and glistened from the widely divergent but far reaching origins of power within them.

Cast from the mould of fate, these blue giants had found themselves bound to the Earth and the company of mankind; but due to their vastly superior gifts, they also discovered themselves fitted only to lead the comparatively dull minds of the humans about them. Being neither angels nor men, they fell to ruling purely from the resources of their own brilliant minds, while they worshipped nothing, save perhaps their own power. They brought to the World the majesty of full, searching and active minds; yet they were unable to correlate mind and spirit — for from the gift of the last they had been barred due to the sin from the unions of their forebears.

Thus it came about in this land of Mu — I learnt the name of the Continent from their thoughts — that the finer race in the north, over whom the blue giants ruled, quite quickly lost all true recognition of God under the sterile but tremendously powerful influence of these supermen: the people's hold on reality loosened, they forget their source, and turned towards the baubles and playthings brought to them by the giants. Consequently, although these gentle giants ruled fairly and well, giving to the land all the ingenious inventions they created to make easier the lives of their subjects, yet the people sank into moral decay in spite — or perhaps because — of all their

rulers' material efforts.

As Pellafino and I continued to watch, we became aware that this was no ordinary meeting, but a special one convened to decide on the dissemination of their subject race by the final and total withdrawal of its leaders: hence the air of fatality which hung like a pall in the big room.

Each one of these great men understood every material facet of life on Mu, and each one of them knew full well that they had somehow failed to uplift and enhance the lives of the humans in their care. Each one was a great man and well able to face facts, however bitter, without faltering or prevaricating before their judgements. Each one of them knew all there was to know about the nature of the people of Mu, and each in part upheld the fair northerners in particular on the broad shoulders of his own knowledge and power. Yet with all their greatness of intellect, or perhaps because of its blinding effect when used alone, not a single one of these supermen was able to recognize the presence and existence of an overall Deity, a Creator greater than they who had in fact created them.

The terrible pathos of the whole scene being enacted before our eyes touched me to the quick; for even I — simple and incomplete as I normally was — knew more than they; but because of this ignorance and 'accident' of birth, these men were about to sacrifice their splendid lives on the altar of their failure to maintain peace and harmony, in conjunction with material progress, for the nation in their care; they were about to step off into the most unutterable darkness of death purely to honour their faith to a

nation of faithless men.

We watched, helpless to interfere; and I could feel that Pellafino's distress was as great as mine. Silently, one of their number — a huge man even beside his fellows — rose to his feet and walked over to the wall nearest to where we were watching. Without pausing, he reached out and touched some spot beyond my sight: immediately a small panel of the apparently solid marble slid away, revealing an alcove in which was set a silver tray holding nine empty glasses and a crystal flagon of amber-coloured liquid.

For a moment I wondered vaguely why there should be nine glasses, when there were only eight giants assembled in this octagonal hall; but then I realized that one of them must have died some time in the past, reducing their number to eight, and also implying that — however long their natural span — they were a declining race anyway.

Picking up the tray in a huge hand, the blue giant walked back with it to his fellows, who by now were seating themselves on their cushions around the table. The tray with its contents was held out to the nearest giant; gravely the man took a glass, unstoppered the flagon, and with extreme care filled his glass with the amber fluid. The process was repeated with every giant; and I noticed that the liquid was heavy and viscous, giving off a sweet and pungent aroma that soon pervaded the whole room, at least to the level from which we were watching.

At length all of them were served, including their leader (or so I supposed and felt he was) who had carried round the tray. Every giant's charged glass was set before him on the table, while their serving leader stood still for a moment, the silver tray held slackly in

one hand, and the empty ninth glass with the flagon and its remaining contents in the other.

Since we had entered this hall, and during all the time we were there, no words were spoken; yet, strangely, there was nothing uncanny or oppressive about this, for I felt that these men's minds were so perfectly attuned in telepathy as not to need the medium of speech — certainly this was the case in this tremendous moment of time.

For the few brief moments that their great leader stood quietly and quite still, I could feel almost tangibly the intense pressure of all their intercommunicating thoughts. Then the tension broke as incisively as the immediate cutting off of a flow of electricity: with three unhurried and enormous strides towards the open alcove, the leader replaced the silver tray, closed the panel by the same mysterious means, and strode back to the table with only the empty glass and the flagon in his hand.

With no apparent pause, almost in a single flowing movement, the great man raised his hand and dashed both the flagon and the glass to the floor, shattering the silence and smashing both articles into innumerable little pieces. Then he bent, lifted his own charged glass from the table, held it up while the others followed suit, when — as calmly as if they were drinking wine — they all raised their glasses to their lips and quaffed their deadly potions to the last bitter drops.

For a few tense seconds nothing happened; save that the leader sat down on his own cushion, while the sickly stench of spilt amber fluid from the shattered flagon made the air heavy with sleep. Gradually, one by one, the giants began to succumb to the poison;

their eyes grew heavier; their interchange of thought, as energy, weakened and slowed down as every second passed; until at last there was nothing, nothing that moved in the ether, as their huge frames slowly collapsed, and every one of them lay dead and still on the cold marble floor.

Their passing had been easy and painless, and now their blue faces were strangely void and expressionless as they lay like fallen statues in their final sleep — as if they had died without any trace of feeling or emotion. I, too, felt flat and empty now that the deed was done. While they had lived the air had been charged with the most vivid mental vitality; but now they had gone — leaving nothing behind them — there was only a fearful, hollow emptiness where their thoughts had once quickened with borrowed life.

Truly, even more surely than before, I knew in those moments that the blue giants' greatness had sprung only from within themselves; and, furthermore, now that they were dead, all that they had gleaned and brought to this Continent would also soon lie in lifeless ashes. Never was death more absolute and complete than here in this great octagonal hall: nothing lived, not even a memory; and Pellafino and I grew afraid lest we, too, should be drawn into this same awful and empty vortex. A vortex born from the false lust of opposites; born, yes; but born in sin; and born only to die.

Taking Pellafino's hand in mine, we sped as one from the room with its unholy atmosphere, through the empty building and out into the open air beyond; noticing, as we fled, that there was now no barrier to hinder our flight.

Swiftly the scene receded from us, until once again

we viewed this Continent of Mu from afar and as a whole, secure behind our bastions of love and reality.

Again time passed by before our eyes, but slowly; and we watched as the fair northern race crumbled and disintegrated in the absence of the upholding strength and leadership of the giants, on whom these people had come to lean so heavily. This internal rot, and consequent weakness, in turn adversely affected the hundreds of thousands of negroes enslaved from the south, leaving unaffected only the insulated brown-skinned race from the central desert and rolling hills. Bereft of their leaders in knowledge and power, we watched as all the wonderful inventions ground to a halt, either from lack of expertise and maintainance, or failing one after another because the people were quite unable to tap, or replenish, the source of mysterious energy known only to the blue giants.

Within a month or so all sources of this sophisticated energy had run down in the north, and the festering decay in the people in this heart of Mu broke out and spread across the land in a destructive wave of lawlessness and greed; the nation, and the communities within the nation, crumbled, split and scattered, so that in effect each person was only responsible to himself and his own. Meanwhile, the numerous long-enslaved blacks from the south, seeing their white masters helpless and in disarray, without any means to hold them in repression, rose up and slayed where they could, their hearts burning with hate for their white overlords who had grown as soft as butter during their long years of moral decline.

In an incredibly short space of time, the long repressed flames of fear and primitive hate burst their

bonds into a terrible, crude and disorganized war, in which the weapons on both sides were generally hand-to-hand and bloody — for the northerners were never allowed to develop sophisticated weaponry, this being one point on which the peace-loving giants had been quite adamant.

Bands of fierce-eyed negroes raged across the country, destroying and slaughtering wherever they went; while the whites fled before them, disseminated and broken, save for here and there where there were men strong enough to organize small pockets of resistance.

None the less, although numerically inferior, the blacks steadily gained ascendancy over the generally soft and leaderless whites; mainly because the negroes were the hardier race, used to privations, physical labour and a certain degree of unity in slavery, while the fair-skinned northerners had become effete and rudderless under the benign rule of the blue giants.

Before a year had passed since the deaths of the eight giants, nearly all the cities in the north had been plundered or completely razed to the ground by fire; while the death roll, especially amongst the whites, had grown to alarming proportions; in fact the northerners were at length to lose nearly ninety-eight per cent of their original population on Mu.

But such an extremely savage intensity of slaughter could not last for very long, and the war began to flag and slow to a final position of stalemate; with most of the remaining whites — a tougher and firmer core — trapped in the far north-west of Mu on a long peninsula of land, giving them a natural protection from the sea on three sides.

At this stage the negroes could not advance any

further without suffering terrible losses to themselves; since the peninsula, though long and fairly wide, was only connected to the mainland by a narrow neck of rocky land scarcely more than a quarter of a mile across; and even this was jagged and broken land on a steeply mounting slope, with the incline in favour of the whites.

This final bastion was held by the northerners with grim determination; so that eventually the blacks were forced to withdraw and content themselves by holding their enemy at bay in a state of seige — for the peninsula, about three to four miles in length and between one and two miles in width, could not possibly support for long the eighty thousand or so remaining northerners crammed on to it.

During the next two months the physical pattern in the north declined and worsened rapidly for both races. In spite of all the northerners' efforts, death continued to strike ruthlessly and impartially from either starvation, exposure, or a combination of both; until at length the numbers of those who died became so great that their emaciated bodies had to be cast into the sea while still warm, making way for those who had the strength to survive a little longer, while offering a prime food for the thousands of great sharks which, now continually, infested the sea around this spit of land.

In such cruel fashion were their numbers further reduced, until there were not more than fifteen hundred men, women and children left on the peninsula. But these, although lean and gaunt, were the strongest of their race; and it appeared to us that the neck of land on which they existed might just support them, but only so long as they could continue

to hold off the negro invaders.

Fortunately for this slim remnant of a once great nation, their former slaves were weary of war, and sought rather to plunder, lust, and generally satisfy their carnal appetites; thus only leaving a standing force of sufficient strength to contain their white opponents on the peninsula.

Had the blacks been aware of the frightful decimation in the numbers of those who held on to this little piece of land, they might have attacked and conquered without too much loss; but the whites had grown wily, and had cast their dead into the sea from the furthest promontory, while maintaining an apparently strong force across the neck of land over which the blacks would have had to pass to overcome them; furthermore, the negroes, ever-primitive in their desires, were becoming impatient and tired of waiting and watching day after day, their minds becoming dulled and bored as they turned away from their profitless duties, inclining instead towards other and more enticing riches which lay so easily to hand all across the country they had conquered.

At first petty quarrels broke out amongst the waiting negro force; then they began to whisper together; and finally to break away under cover of darkness in bands of between five and twenty at a time, the numbers of deserters increasing as every day passed. In the end only a few of their leaders remained with a mere handful of men left to them — these then consulted together, realized the utter purposelessness in remaining, and also left to plunder and take what they could as the spoils of war from the ravaged country of their beaten masters.

All this, in considerable detail, Pellafino and I saw

as time rolled steadily on before our eyes. We watched as the negroes ravaged the fair lands of the north, how they used what they wished for the convenience of the moment, and how the very face of nature altered as great fires swept over much of the countryside, consuming buildings, grass, crops and whole woods alike; until most of the land was laid waste from their madness, and hunger began to gnaw at their bellies, so that often they turned and fought each other in their primitive savagery.

Of all this desecration the remaining northerners were largely unaware; although they guessed at much of what was going on, for they were intelligent and observant, made more so by their recent terrible difficulties and privations.

* * * * *

Once more the scene before our eyes blurred and faded as we became conscious of someone standing behind us. We turned, and beheld before our wondering eyes a very great personage, radiant in Light and power, his very presence commanding peace and tranquillity, his being indescribable in earthly terms and phrases.

I learnt his name, for he had known Pellafino from before; but I am not permitted to speak it, not — at least — until the turbulent age in which we now live has rolled away and revealed the Spring of a newly, and more brightly, dawning day: that day is not yet upon us, though it is very close at hand, so is my memory blurred and my lips sealed for the present.

This great man inclined his head in the most gracious fashion after introducing himself to me and

greeting Pellafino, and spoke in tones of truth and fire — "What you have seen in terms of yesterday amount, in fact, to naught but the birth-pangs of today and tomorrow. Look once more on the silent scene, and listen to my words."

This very great person then moved forward to stand between Pellafino and myself, while, in response to his closeness, the frame of my spirit quivered to his vibrant emanations, drawing up the flame and light within me until it glowed and shone in refreshed brilliance. We looked reluctantly back towards the scene thrown up by the Memory Banks of Life, though our eyes were frequently drawn in fascination to the magnitude of the man who spoke words wrapped in the flames of Life and knowledge.

"What you are about to see is the end of a Continent, the final dissemination of its peoples, and the closing of the gates on that which was once the Garden of Eden. Most of the people remaining on Mu at this moment will die, for there is little true Life left in them; but from those few who will live, and from their seed already scattered widely over the whole Earth, will spring forth new nations. Look now, and see in a space that which passed nearly forty thousand years ago, that which is from the past to you, but that which is yet timeless and always in reality; look, and hearken to my words."

We looked because we must, although to me the petty struggles of Man were small enough when set alongside the living presence of this wonderful and very advanced being, this great personage who had long since risen above the trials of the flesh, and who now stood between us like a cleaving knife of flame.

Then I saw that the scene before us did not vary so

much to the tune of time, but more so to the direction and pattern of his thoughts and words. We seemed like eagles soaring over the mountains and dales of living matter; eagles who turned and spun gracefully, not to the laws of nature, but purely on the ethers of spirit — seeing all, beholding all, yet taking no part in that which we saw . . . We felt ourselves being drawn upwards through dimension after dimension, feeling lighter and freer the higher we rose; but also carrying more closely the finer burdens and subtleties which lay close to the heart of all Life; here there was no place for anything that was not true and real, not pure and unsullied, and not fundamentally imbued with the long and powerful arms of love and wisdom.

We watched as the fair-skinned northerners built a ship from the slim resources available to them; not a fine vessel, such as they had been accustomed to, but a simple wooden boat, crudely constructed and powered only by wind and oars.

"These few remaining people are preparing to flee the Continent of Mu," went on our guide; "they know nothing of the gigantic natural cataclysms to come; but they do know that their mother country, and their homes and culture thereon, are laid waste and gone forever; for they can see that they would never have the strength to recover their country and conquer their one-time slaves. Few in fact will escape, for they will sail to the west, and their ship will be sunk in the hurricanes which rage across these sea wastes at this season of the year.

"None the less," he continued — as I watched him, and his flaming aura that came and went in changing colours, reflecting his thoughts and the depths which lay and leapt therein — "some few will survive from all

of the three decimated races on Mu; and these, together with many who have gone before to colonize other parts of the World, will scatter and form the foundations of the countries and nations as you know them today. Look now and see, but not with the eyes that you looked before."

Pellafino and I looked, for neither of us could resist this man's compelling power, while I at least was amazed at what we saw; before this we had watched the history of Man unfold in natural sequence, even if its bewildering speed in passing had been such as could only be absorbed in our superbly heightened states; but now we entered into a new and higher dimension in which knowledge and history flowed from the Memory Banks of Life — not so much through thought and sight, but rather through a series of arresting impressions which I find most difficult to translate and express, even in their basic simplicities. Yet I will try, for what we saw far surpassed in depth and content those things which we had seen in sequence before, accompanied sometimes by graphic explanations from the great personage who stood between us.

In the first instance, and in a fashion that completely defies me to reflect adequately in words, and with the full spectrum of its colours, an impression was thrown up before us of the whole World as it then was; a picture free from even the lightest bonds of time, and one from which we saw the movements of the races from the beginning, two hundred and fifty thousand years ago; yes, even to today as the very geography of the Earth changed before our eyes.

We saw the lines of travel and colonization, lines of

movement which had remained basically unchanged for many thousands of years; routes of escape for some, adventure and colonization for others, but routes whereby the rest of the World remained linked to the benign sovereignty of Mu.

We saw how the fair-skinned northerners had long since occupied North America from Panama to Alaska; how they were also rulers in Atlantis, another great island Continent lying between Europe and America in the north Atlantic Ocean, and from thence had passed on to the western shores of Norway, Iceland and some parts of France and Britain.

We saw — years before their uprising — how some of the dark negroid people from the south of Mu had sailed east from the motherland to the western shores of South America, and from there into finely-cut canals which ran through flat or gently rolling land, land which has since been raised up by volcanic action into the towering Andes mountains, and which shortly led into a huge sea covering all of what is now the Amazon basin, very nearly splitting the sub-Continent into two separate lands.

From the eastern opening of this Amazonian sea — where it entered into the greater Atlantic — we saw how these negroes had sailed across the ocean to the then empty lands of West Africa, and from there had spread inland as far as Ethiopia, and south into the heart of that vast Continent, leaving behind a sprinkling of their people from the West Indies to Conakry and the Camaroons.

We saw also how the lightly-built brown people of the central plains and deserts had followed much the same route through South America; although not before they had first explored and established

settlements over most of the country, from Guatamala in the north to the River Plate and central Chile in the south, only pressing on later to the north-west between Africa and Atlantis into the Mediterranean and Asia Minor.

To the west of Mu we saw how the fair people of the north had long since established lines of contact across to China, up through the steppes and wastes of Russia to the Balkans, and to the North Sea coast of Spain, Normandy and Ireland. Meanwhile, the brown-skinned race was spreading from the opposite direction across to Egypt, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, India, Burma and the Malay Peninsula.

Pellafino and I saw all; although I have only quickly sketched the broad outlines of movements as being of some interest in this story, leaving more detailed accounts for archeologists and historians to unravel later in greater detail. All that we saw in a timeless and advanced state occupied many thousands of years on Earth: the three races, while originally based in Mu, moved in part for one reason or another; exploring, occupying and infiltrating slowly onwards, until eventually they had spread out all along and around the routes I have described so very briefly.

Yet, however far from Mu, no group, save for the negroes, at first betrayed the overall rulership of their motherland; the peoples changed and adjusted according to their difficulties, the climates through which they passed, and to accord with those parts of the World where they finally settled and lived, acknowledging themselves as extensions of Mu wherever they travelled and settled.

Only the negroes from the south quickly forgot what little they had learned, and inversed their slim

knowledge to paganistic witchcraft and evil practices; until, many years later, those who lived in the West Indies, West Africa and Ethiopia became so subject to the powers of darkness that they knew and saw no other, save only dimly in their racial memory: thus did these first negroes become a fallen race under their dark cloud of evil; hewers of wood, carriers of water, and slaves or servants to all those whose wisdom had carried them on; even when that wisdom became twisted and gnarled, and even when the branches of these superior races later fell into states of worldliness, greed, egocentricity and darkness.

Today, as a result of this choice and heritage, the negro stands apart and below; some struggle to rise above their state, but of these only a few succeed, for the burden which lies upon them is dark and heavy, their inner slavery a living warning to us all: a condition almost of enforced blindness and incapacitation.

Then — not long after the death of the last of the blue giants, and shortly after the Continent of Mu had been at its zenith, the peak of its power and influence, the centre of the World's civilizations, and the heart of trade and commerce — catastrophe struck with an awful swiftness.

Great rumblings, earthquakes and volcanic outbursts shook the southern regions of Mu, throwing up mountains of white-hot lava, billowing clouds of dark smoke, and stirring vast waves from the south Pacific to roll in over the land, drowning many of the negro inhabitants. In a few days the southern third of Mu had sunk, leaving only the tips of spouting, barren volcanoes, and the peaks from the twin ranges of mountains rising above the huge, heaving sea that

covered the sunken land.

For many years the people remaining on Mu lived in a state of stunned fear; petty war was forgotten under the influence of a common terror greater than any had ever known; for a while life came to an abrupt halt.

But far away, cornered in the north-west of the Continent at its furthest extremity, those who remained of the fair-skinned northerners took the opportunity to extend inland for some miles, grow crops, and live for a while in safety and isolation, away from the negroes who now inhabited most of their remaining land on Mu.

Meanwhile, as time passed, the innate superstition inherent in the negroes twisted itself into a dread of the fair northerners, whom they linked with the terrible holocaust which had submerged all of their own low-lying lands. Once started, this fear grew like fire in dry grass, until at length they turned their frustrated savagery against the dwindling remnants of the brown people, killing and driving out those who remained from their bleak central plains and rolling hills.

Several generations passed, and with their passing the stark terror from the tragedy mellowed and faded into history; although there still remained the almost unspoken fear of the fair northerners.

Then, one day, and even more suddenly and violently, the Continent of Mu reeled and heaved to subterranean contortions from the movements of deeply underlying belts of gas. Temples, palaces, buildings and monuments all crashed to the ground, wracked by the fearful forces at work; and that which had remained of the cities from the desecration of the war in the north, were now further reduced to heaps of

dead and useless ruins.

As the land rose and fell, cracked and split, the boiling turbulent fires beneath burst forth, releasing huge pockets of gases which had hitherto upheld Mu, and which now roared into the air in vast columns of flames and white-hot lava.

During that awful night of terror and utter chaos, Mu was riven asunder; until at last, with deep thunderous growls, the Continent gave up its battle and sank, while the sea rolled in over the land with tremendous weight and force, sweeping all before it, and killing, as far as we could see, over sixty million people — nearly every single person who remained on Mu.

Although Pellafino knew of this story of Man's past, yet still both of us looked up at our guide in horror; for the tragedy was the most terrible ever to strike mankind in all his time on Earth — its reflection written in the form of Noah and the Ark.

"Yes," he nodded sadly, "I know what is in your minds; but such a disaster was necessary if the souls of men were not to die utterly, and if they are to spring anew from their broken seeds and strive once more to form back into the breath of Life. Understand, that on Mu Truth and Life were nearly dead; Man had not only grown worldly, but he had entirely distorted reality, and was therefore existing in a negative state of falsity, which ultimately can only end in death. Mankind, when born of Nature and not of Spirit, needs constant reminders in the stages of his birth and growth; else, peradventure, he falls away, tied hand and foot in the cords and knots of his earthly desires, and fixed in the pattern only of his own finite, mundane and pragmatic knowledge.

"But you two understand this well enough; it is only the shock of the consequences of accumulated sin that temporarily shakes your equilibriums. Sadly, natural Man must suffer crudely, and even be destroyed in part, to temper and purify his steel; yet, in the very moment he suffers, remember too that his pains are brought about by his own wilful actions in sliding along an easy path against the laws of Life, and that, in fact, he does not need to suffer at all. The truth and wonders of Life are all about mankind; in the very ethers that he breathes, and in the self-insulated spirit which is his from the beginning; Life and Truth are everywhere — yet Man, in his freedom and littleness of purpose, chooses not to see, nor to make the necessary effort to lift his mind and soul."

Our guide smiled gently with a touch of whimsy, and there was that in his face and manner which spoke far more widely and deeply than his mere words to us; so great in fact was the subtle gap between this magnificent being and the words he spoke, that for a moment my mind fumbled — then broke into light and deeper comprehension.

I looked up at this great personage, and then at Pellafino, and met their eyes and understanding. Instinctively, I reached across and clasped their hands, one in each of mine.

"Ah, Peter!" murmured our guide warmly; "I see your stature has not fled from you. Know that Life and knowledge cannot be imparted effectively by words alone; the medium is too limited in so far as it has no power to build by itself, there must be some creative spark of his own in Man that can flame up and be inspired by the word; furthermore, in natural Man the seed-beds of the mind are dulled and only crudely

receptive — even antagonistic — to the words of others, no matter who they are. As with Love, Life and knowledge must in essence swell from within a seeker's desire to know and learn; then words may help, but even so only as a pointer; for words alone can never form any part that is greater than the tip of an iceberg, the vaster part of which lies below the surface."

For a few moments our guide was silent as his words and spirit soaked into me. I knew that what he had said about the self-cast destiny of mankind was such as could have flown from the minds and lips of many wise men; yet there was a light about him which illuminated his words into arrows of fire, arrows that shone and glowed and stirred my receptive mind, stirred me so that from within myself there sprang into being a glimpse into the mind of God, and an inexpressible depth of knowledge and understanding which radiated reality and truth, and which was quite unshakable.

The picture before us of the dying Continent of Mu had long since faded, while the screen (for want of a better word) was blank and still; but this was naught to me, for in my unruffled calm and peace of mind and spirit, I was content to stay for ever and wait upon Pellafino — my heart's twin — and our guide.

But such was not to be, for Life must move and we must strive and learn; not for Pellafino nor myself was the eternal haven of peace, nor even for our guide: I knew then that while true peace of mind lay in stillness from within, yet in this stillness was the very essence and embodiment of vibrant Life and movement, the calm energy of reality which fought to quell and tame the rebellious nature in Man; and which must so live

and be into eternity.

So, even while I sighed, I looked up at our guide willingly enough as he spoke again.

"It is time to take a fleeting look at some of the turning events in your two lives in the past, before moving on to the present and the future. Look once more upon the screen before you."

Pellafino smiled at me reassuringly, for she knew already at least a fair part of our secrets from the past. I smiled back, squeezed and let slip her hand, then turned my full attention to the screen before us.

Light vibrated, wavered, then shot together to form a sweeping vista of wind and waves, of scudding clouds, of a bleak and jagged cliff against which granite base the rolling sea crashed in thunderous roars, flinging its broken spray high into the air, and of several thousand people who lived and camped under crude and crowded conditions on the inhospitable land above.

We swept closer, and beneath the sea I discerned great grey shapes of countless sharks, waiting patiently for the dead bodies which they had come to know would be flung into the sea every day at any hour. I recognized immediately the scene as being the peninsula of land in the north-west of Mu, and the people as being the remnants of the fair northerners, trapped thereon by the negroes who had swept through and ravaged these fairest regions of Mu.

I watched with trembling anticipation as the screen drew us closer and closer, closer to two people who stood together and alone on the furthest promontory of land, gazing out over the sea that thundered and lashed at the base of the cliff hundreds of feet below them, gazing into space and lost in themselves.

The scene rushed forward, and I felt myself being drawn irresistibly into the body of the man. The change was rapid; but so hyper-tuned were my mind and senses, that I saw and absorbed all that was outside before I stood and moved and dwelt awhile within: the girl was about twenty-five years of age, lithe, graceful and very fair of face and form, and I saw her as Pellafino, my heart and my eternal love — but her face was sad, and touched by that thin ethereal beauty which sometimes shines through those who are pure and near to death.

At the same moment I saw the man as myself; a man of about thirty years of age, and of much the same form and figure as I had seen when Pellafino had drawn me from my child's body by the pool such a very, very long time ago — the same, but gaunt and thin from hunger, strain and distress.

Then I was once more one with myself and my thoughts of that time.

* * * * *

I stood silently with an arm around Pellafino's waist, so thin from hunger and fragile in my embrace that I held her close, afraid that the strongly-gusting sea wind would blow my heart away, casting her over the cliff and on to the jagged rocks below. As always, a part of me thrilled to her touch and closeness; though at the same time I was stricken with a hopeless, dark and fearful dread; an almost inexplicable fear which brushed my mind with the cold talons of death, an awful terror of the near future in the sensing of our parting, and a terrible knife-like wall which hung tremulously as the sword of Damocles to fall and sever

us one from the other.

The pain and certainty were more terrible than I care to fully expose and express here on these pages, the stygian darkness so thick and tangible that a groan broke from my lips, my mind crumpled and tears burst and ran from my eyes, accompanied by rending, choking sobs which I could not control.

Pellafino turned her face up to mine, and I saw through my haze of tears the thinness of her features and the transparency of her skin. Tender, wonderful, eternal love shone richly from her eyes, as her hand moved up to my head and drew my broken spirit to her shoulder and her heart, while her fingers wandered through my wind-tangled hair, soothing my abraded spirit and easing away my fears, for the time at any rate; though I still knew them to be real enough.

"Peter, my dearest," she said softly, her face pressed to mine, "I know you fear for me, for us and for the future. My sweet, I cannot take away this burden, and I will not lie to you, for I also feel that our paths must soon lie apart for a long time to come; I can't explain my thoughts; I don't know what lies ahead for either of us; but I am sure, utterly sure, that we are one in the greater life, now, always and for ever, and that nothing can part us in reality and in the end.

"So take heart, my love; these men — and their wives and children — who are building and sailing with you, look up to you as their leader and their strength; they must not see you like this or their own thin courage will wilt; it is from your own strength of mind and purpose wherein must lie the safety and future of the last of our people on Mu."

As she spoke, strength flowed back into my mind

and limbs from the courage in her words. I took her dear face between my hands, gazed deeply into her eyes and soul, then fiercely and hungrily crushed her to me.

We were one, I could feel it; yet at the same time my heart was stricken and torn within me: I could feel the split, could sense the chasm widening; yes, even as I held her so close, I knew that a wide rift lay ahead, a rift that even death would not always close.

Wild thoughts leaped through my mind as the heaviness of Pellafino's hair was caught and lifted by the strong sea wind, blowing over us both, casting at one and the same time a mantle and a shroud over our twined hearts, sealing us as one in life and through death. Then, in a moment, the wind fitfully turned, spinning about, and ripped away her hair so that it streamed towards the sea; exposing our faces once more to the sun, the winking glare from the rolling waves, and the crude forces of nature.

I cannot remember all that I said, or perhaps I do not wish to; for such moments are too sacred to share: I plighted my love again and again; but even as I poured out the white heat of my heart, I felt myself, my inner self, being sealed apart in a strange way, holding in and locking up the fair treasures of our lives together on Mu.

Oh! how can I ever begin to express the wonders, and the sense of cruel loss to come, in those revealing and awful moments that Pellafino and I had together: the knife of fate was dividing us like the two halves of a split apple . . . we were one, and yet no longer one; we were together even as Life gently but firmly drew us apart; why, even as I held her in my arms, I knew and felt the raw cut from the incision hardening over,

covering up a terrible wound behind which beat another heart, its threads tangled and awry; yet a heart which held within it the seeds of purpose, as it also held the terrible promise of an unknown loneliness to ride with me for countless years to come.

We drew apart, and I saw, in spite of Pellafino's courage and foresight, that her tears flowed as freely as had mine down her poor thin cheeks. My torn heart nearly broke at the sight, but there was nothing I could do save to comfort her in the gentled fire of my love; no words would come to my lips, for all that could be said was being said better with our hearts.

After a while we turned away from this hallowed spot for ever, for never again in the coming weeks could we stand here and be together; neither did we speak again in such closeness, since we knew in some strange way that the doors of the past and the present were already fast closing, and that our strengths and closeness must lie quiet and grow within ourselves; only did our eyes follow each other everywhere on this neck of land, while a curious anaesthetizing peace stole over us both as we lived on awhile, gripped in the sure hands of fate.

Every day we awoke to more deaths — deaths from hunger and exposure; and every day we cast into the sea those who had fallen — cast them forth with a prayer and a blessing to the mysterious and unknown God we worshipped. But those who cast, together with those who lived on and watched, saw the emaciated bodies drop to the sea far below with a sense of relief; for every one who died left a little more space for those who lived, and a little more food to be rationed out.

Daily, too, about fifty men under my leadership would descend to a small enclosed beach, the only one

around the savage peninsula, and there work with the very crudest of tools on the construction of a boat. For its timber we plundered first the slim resources which lay within our grasp, and then sent out parties at night to raid the forests some distance behind the line of negroes who held us in siege. However, more often than not these forays behind their lines ended in savage fighting, bloodshed and death, since it was not possible to cut and carry timber silently, and our men were made dangerous and desperate by hunger, weariness and frustration.

Fortunately for us, we observed that the negro line was becoming thinner every day as their men deserted, slinking back into the interior to plunder and steal what they could from the country they had conquered — or so we surmised their main reason for leaving. This made it a little easier for us to venture out at night and take what we could, although we still had to go in strength since the woods, and all the land beyond, teemed with parties of savages; savages who were also growing hungry, and mad — mad as wild beasts robbed of their rich, fat prey.

None the less, life was comparatively cheap when set alongside the essentials of food and timber; so we stole forth almost every night to cut and take whatever we could, and to kill whenever we must and when forced to it by the savages who opposed us. The whole business sickened me; but we had to fight to live, and we had to live on to defend and sustain our loved ones and those who remained of our race on Mu — thus we grew hard and tough, stealing, fighting and killing for what we desperately needed.

But still our population on the peninsula dwindled daily; rapidly down to less than ten thousand, and

then more slowly to a comparative handful of about fifteen hundred people. At this stage our losses eased, for we were able to forage, raid and rob for just enough to keep the last of our people alive, while those who remained were generally hardier than those who had died.

And so there arose some semblance of order and discipline out of the ashes of tragedy and near chaos. Men and women from the strong and able met and chose their leader: our General, as we named him; a man of forty-five years, grizzled, tough, intelligent, wise, and sometimes ruthless when the necessity arose. He appointed six men under him whose duties were clearly defined, and who were granted extensive powers to curb any attempts at stealing from others within the community, insurrection or disobedience, even to the death sentence itself.

I was one of those six leaders, and it was my task, as a Commander in the Mu navy, to build a boat able to hold as many people as possible, and to obtain the materials for this task by whatever means I could, using my ingenuity to its uttermost, and not sparing my men to get what I needed.

The seven of us held court whenever it was considered necessary, which meant — in effect — most evenings after the sun had sunk below the horizon. So we sat often in a ring, apart from the people who had put themselves in our care, and discussed with fertile minds every possible means whereby we might further our release from the intolerable situation into which we had been cast. We sent out spies at night to listen in to the negroes as they sat around their fires; and, although these intrepid men could not actually intermingle with the negroes

due to the colour of their skins, and other obvious physiological differences, yet they managed to glean gradually an incredible amount of useful information from these ventures; not the least important being that these low-born slaves of ours had overrun the whole of our fair land, leaving it in a state of utter chaos, and quite impossible to recapture when bearing in mind the vast disparity in numbers: some four to five million blacks against our few hundred young men, old men, women and children; numbers which were still slowly decreasing as we lost the irreplaceable flower of our race from our vital forays into enemy territory.

No, Mu itself was lost to us for the time being; and, if there was to be any hope at all of its eventual recapture, we would have to elicit the aid of our overseas Colonies. The peninsula itself was safe enough from attack, for the negroes, satiated with blood, were turning their attentions to plundering the country, and no doubt before long to murdering each other. As with the Spartans in the Pass of Thermopylae, we were difficult to get at on our neck of land; besides being hardened veterans, desperate and terrible to face in battle, having all to gain and little enough to lose.

Thus we turned our attentions to the sea, to the building of our boat, and to the attempt whereby some few of us might reach the nearest mainland — the islands of Japan or the eastern coast of Russia — and from our Colonies to seek first their aid in taking our people off the peninsula, and then, if possible, to muster sufficient forces to recapture Mu.

On the first at least we were fairly certain of success; assuming, of course, that we were able to cross the hazardous seas between the two Continents, made

especially dangerous at this time of the year with frequent storms, hurricanes and mountainous waves, lessening our chances of success to little better than a twenty-five per cent gamble in the sort of craft I could design from the primitive materials to hand.

However, as regards the possibility of persuading our Colonies to recapture Mu, I, for one, was doubtful, while most of the other six leaders were of like minds: Mu had long been the mother country to all the World, controlled by the blue giants and my own people. But Mu had grown soft and corrupt; gradually and slowly, so that we scarcely noticed it, each generation becoming less and less self-demanding, and more and more insular and selfish — yes, I, born into the nobility of Mu, say it with sorrow. Even while the blue giants had lived, many of the older Colonies had sought to break away, and would have done so before had it not been for the tremendous mental and technical powers wielded by the giants through us. Now this source of power was gone, and gone with it was any authority we would otherwise have held.

Furthermore, during the time of the negro revolt, and since we had been cornered on this peninsula of land, none had seen any sign of a ship or a plane — and this in spite of a constant watch being kept by day and night. There was something ominous in this total absence of any foreign craft since the fall of Mu with its leaders, something we could not fathom or understand properly.

None the less, we had no choice; for we could not remain indefinitely on this spit of land, nor safely venture beyond the narrow neck we had to guard so strongly; so we set to on our allotted tasks, organized

the community, built what shelters we could, raided behind the negro lines for food and timber, and, under my command, worked at building a boat that could weather the high seas.

I had hoped to build a boat to hold a hundred people, but it soon became evident that this was too ambitious an objective with the amount of long timber we required, and too great a drain on our lives in obtaining the necessary number of trees from the woods behind the negroes' camp: it is one thing to slink behind the enemy's lines and forage for food, or whatever else could be equally quietly carried away, but quite another to go, armed to the teeth and with whatever tools we had, and hack down whole trees, then afterwards with tremendous labour to drag these noisily back to our peninsula; thus, of necessity, each timber-foraging party had to have at least twenty-five strong men, while a further fifty were needed to keep the savages at bay.

These unquiet forays angered the negroes, and invariably brought them out to harry us; causing each such enterprise to be costly in lives. The darkness was our friend, and under the cover of its mantle our men became terrible opponents; slipping quietly from cover to cover, flowing with the very shadows as they moved, they easily outwitted and out-killed the savages who feared and hated the deceptive gloom.

None the less, the negroes outnumbered us by perhaps five or six to one, so that even in the beginning we rarely lost less than half a dozen men in an evening — and these just for a single tree trunk. Later the negroes grew more cunning in their fear, attacking us in close-knit bands of four or five men, and making our task far more difficult and

hazardous; for while one man may stealthily outwit and kill another man in the shifting gloom of the woods, this guerilla method of fighting is made far more dangerous when retribution lies waiting hand in hand, and quick escape is made more difficult.

We put our own men in pairs, and loosely linked each pair with another; but even though we took usually two or three lives for every one of ours, yet our losses still rose to between fifteen and twenty in a single night.

Plainly such loss of lives could not be tolerated for long, or our whole community would become endangered. So I replanned our ship on a smaller scale, then later made it smaller still — until at length the end result was a boat of about twenty-five feet in length, powered either by six oarsmen, three on each side, or by the fresh sea wind bearing on a lateen-type sail hoisted up on a single mast, and stiffened along its base and one side by booms of light but tough and flexible wood. About three-quarters of the boat's length was covered over with seamed strips and patched squares of tarpaulin over a curved framework of bent branches, giving it some resemblance to a Chinese junk, but providing some protection against the whipping sea-drenched winds, the dehydrating heat of the midday sun, and heavy seas and swamping.

It was the best I could design under the circumstances, and a poor lubberly craft it looked; but it was sturdy and rode lightly enough in the water, for we had worked hard and carefully since our boat must be able to withstand the battering of huge seas and high winds; yet at the same time we had been forced to work slowly, for we were always hungry and tired.

The boat was finished and provisioned about three weeks after the day that Pellafino and I had stood together on the promontory. We had no paint for the hull, although we did find a gum that seeped from certain trees in the woods, and this we softened and squeezed most effectively between all the joints, so that when the time came to roll the boat down the short, steep beach on a series of round logs into the surf and the sea, the leaks which sprang were only small, and soon sealed by the wettened and swelling wood.

Save for the times when I had led some of the forays behind the negro lines for timber and gum, Pellafino and I had scarcely been apart during all of that time. In spite of the hidden wall which we knew very well lay between us — a grim shadow over the present, and a more concrete destiny for the future — we lived, nearly as possible, as one, slaking our drying hunger for each other in the certain knowledge that the time was drawing closer to hand when we must be split awhile and part.

So we drank of each other; foolishly perhaps, but uncaring as children of the hemlock that we swallowed so rashly, the consequences of which lay clearly patterned directly ahead; caring only for the love we bore and remembered, and which must endure at all costs through God alone knew what dimensions and states — although we knew little of these at the time.

As soon as we had proved our boat to be seaworthy — after making some minor alterations while it lay anchored off shore in a mildly heaving swell — we got together those volunteers who had been chosen by the Council to sail with my crew of six and myself, and told them to prepare to embark that very night.

Twelve of them, only twelve: five young married couples, and a widowed mother with a boy of eight years of age whose husband had been killed in one of the timber raiding parties. Nineteen souls in all with myself as Captain — but perhaps this was just as well, since our chances of success would be slender enough under normal conditions, and even less so during this wild and stormy season of the year.

Our nearest land was the southernmost tip of Japan, about eight hundred sea miles from our peninsula. Ideally, using the prevailing winds, we should be able to reach our intended destination within two weeks; but I doubted that ideal conditions could possibly prevail, especially when we entered into the waters of the ocean which lay between Mu and Asia, and which acted as a funnel through which winds and storms often condensed and raged, sometimes with terrible force. So I prepared with water and provisions for a voyage of up to a month, and for winds and storms that could blow us either further north, south on to the mainland of China, or even — God forbid — to the Philippines some two thousand miles away to the south, and of no use to us in making quick contact for the rescue of our compatriots marooned on the peninsula.

One of the strict provisos I had made to the Council was that everyone who sailed with me must be a competent swimmer; and so, that night, under a half moon and a bright star-spangled sky, we embarked by swimming in a group out to the boat, the small boy striking out manfully on my left, and Pellafino on my right, swimming almost as easily as a fish — for the sea was as a second home to her.

At last we were all on board, changed out of the

scant wet garments in which we had swum, and into dry robes which had been stored previously under the benches, unshipped the oars, and then pulled slowly away from the land, until at length we caught the steadier flow of the trade wind.

All along the cliff top stood the remnants of our people, waving silently, for they had no wish to arouse the negroes to our intentions. Gradually their shapes grew smaller and more indistinct against the almost brilliantly clear backcloth of the night sky; until, as we hauled up our single rather clumsy sail to catch the wind, the water bubbling merrily around the blunt bows, their individualities were lost, merging into a single elongated blur, before at last they were finally gone from our sight, swallowed by the rugged mass of the cliff on which they stood, swallowed for ever in the mists of destiny — or so Pellafino and I felt as we sat together on the stern thwarts of the boat, my right arm lying along the tiller, and my left about her waist, our imaginations caught in a strange, dark web.

We were silent, everyone was silent. Save for my short orders to the crew to ship oars and to hoist the big, ragged lateen sail, there had been hardly a word spoken since we had sailed an hour and a half before; even the small boy had remained quiet and still, so that I could only guess at their thoughts as my eyes roved about the boat and up towards the bow, searching their withdrawn minds from the blank, moon-silvered faces of the eighteen people before me — but I drew little enough; only that their expressions reflected a measure of their taut and centred thoughts, perhaps tinged with apprehension and pattered lightly by the cold feet of fear; a fear more of the unknown than of the physical, a heavy and inexplicable

consciousness of the presence of giant forces preparing to unleash their might in some great and unknown way.

With Pellafino I looked back towards the shore once more, my keen eyes searching the dark and almost formless cliffs as they lay stark and low on the horizon; and I felt within my inner self that none of us would ever again set eyes on those we had left behind, while at the same time I was also touched by the drear thought that all those who had stood so patiently watching us out of sight, my own people whom I had come to know so well, were stamped in some mysterious way by the seal of death.

I turned back, a saddened puppet firmly in the grip of an all-powerful destiny, and set myself to fixing our course, explaining to all my passengers the few simple rules by which we must rigidly abide during the voyage, organizing the rationing of food and water, and rearranging the seating positions in the boat to suit the convenience of all as nearly as possible.

That night we slept in reasonable peace to the rhythmic swing and heave of the waves. I was able even to lash the tiller so that the boat held to a steady course, nicely balanced between the counter actions of wind, sea and rudder.

* * * * *

The brightening glow of morning found us far from any sight of Mu, and with the easy weather and gentle warmth of dawn our spirits rose, shedding in fickle fashion the dark thoughts and cares of the previous night; away from land, and the sights and sorrows we had endured on Mu, we seemed to take on a fresh

lease of life.

The sense of freedom and cheerfulness of that first morning at sea set the pattern for the next five days, although the initial exuberance became more muted under the sapping heat of the midday sun, and the growing boredom of the long days at sea with little to do but sit and talk, or just to think.

Rather than carry as many people as the boat could safely hold, I had chosen to store on board generous quantities of food and water: the food in the form of dull but sustaining biscuit that we had made on the peninsula, and about two hundred gallons of water in twenty skin containers, allowing us — over a period of thirty days — three pints a day for each person in three portions, morning, midday and just before sunset . . . By crowded lifeboat standards this was an almost luxurious ration of water; even so, nothing was ever wasted, for with the dehydrating heat of the days and the salty sea air, we found that we needed every drop to keep up our strength.

We sailed on for five full nights and into the fifth day, following an almost undeviating course, the trade wind being slightly stronger by day than by night; and so consistent were the wind, the weather generally, and the even swell and currents of the sea, that we quickly fell into a set and rather dull routine. My seaman's nervous caution gradually dispersed, and my hopes rose as we drew closer to our destination; for although I had no means of accurately fixing our position, nor of reading our speed through the water, my experience of the sea, with the aid of a hand compass used for surveying, which had somehow survived the war and our flight to the peninsula, allowed me to fairly accurately determine both our

speed and daily position on a good but simple map that I had in my possession: thus I judged our overall speed throughout a full day to be a little better than three knots in the hour, and our position at dawn on the fifth day at around three hundred and eighty to four hundred sea miles south-east towards the most southerly island of Japan.

At best it was a hit and miss business with only a simple compass and my finely-tuned seafaring instincts, so that I never expected our landfall to be better than forty sea miles to the north or south of where I had set the bows of our boat, while an even wider disparity was easily possible if I had miscalculated the strength of the north-flowing sea current.

In fact all my calculations and skills at seamanship were to be set at naught — for on the dawn of the fifth day I sensed a change: the trade wind strengthened slightly as usual, but with it there was a strange and intangible tension in the air, and by ten in the morning the sky to the south had grown dark and ominous, the sea almost oily in the quiet of its swell and the falling breeze. Then the wind began to gust and veer sharply with increasing violence, the sail slapping and banging viciously, its boom sometimes swinging across the aft of the boat with increasing and frightening force, sufficient to knock down a fully grown man as easily as swatting a fly, and probably to crush his skull into the bargain.

For a while I tried foolishly to run before the storm by turning the bows towards the north; but the gusting wind's strength seemed to come at us from all sides, so that our cumbersome and inflexible lateen sail threatened either to lay us over flat, or to twist and

wrench at our groaning mast and split the boat down the middle.

For a short time I was frustrated and angry at our lubberly craft, as it bowed and dipped and rolled heavily in the rising sea; for we could in no way avoid the storm, which now seemed to rush at us from the south with the speed of an express train. With stupid bitterness and recrimination tearing at me, I sprang to my feet and shouted at the crew to lower the sail, and at everyone else in the boat to start bailing out the sea water, which was pouring in over the gunwales every time the boat was heaved from side to side.

Under the blue giants, and on the soft modern ships that we had had on Mu, I never had the chance to experience a fiercer or more hopeless struggle: the sail itself had somehow become snagged at the top of the mast, refusing to drop when we released its stay ropes, so that under the violent and impetuous weight of the wind, both sail and boom seemed imbued with demonic purpose and satanic fury; caught by the fitful fringes of the gale, tugging and tearing itself again and again from all the efforts of our combined strength, the wind ripped the seamed sailcloth through our hands, until our nails were torn and our palms and fingers bleeding freely; at the same time the boom had become a lethal bludgeon, almost irresistible in its wild swinging, and from which we had to duck and leap to save our eyes.

Below our feet, as we trod heavily from side to side, trying desperately and quite fruitlessly to hold the boom and lower the sail, I saw the water in the boat rising fast in spite of the bailers' magnificent efforts, and that we had very little time to spare before being swamped and lost.

"Cut the sail loose along the boom!" I bellowed at my crew; "cut it free, then lash the boom!"

In the same instant I tore my own knife out of its sheath in my belt, clamped its handle firmly between my teeth; and then, like any fierce and desperate pirate, reached up the mast near to which I stood, and started to climb and cut the short ropes fastening the sail to sliding rings, so painstakingly made from a supple wood curved in steam.

I was wiry and fairly fit; yet, even so, such a task would have been very nearly impossible under any normal conditions of motivation: the jerking, swaying mast, the oiled wood, and the contrary buffeting of the gale on the sail made the climb not only extremely difficult, but very hazardous; especially with my holds on either the short stay ropes, or the wooden rings that girt the mast, which, with the violent movements of the sail under the sharply veering impulses of the capricious gale, threatened to tear my fingers apart, or mangle them utterly between ring and mast.

Grimly, fiercely even, I clawed my way up, a foot or two at a time, then held on tightly with both feet, my left arm curled around the mast, while with my free right hand I took the knife from my mouth and slashed at the short stay ropes holding the sail to the rings.

Below me I was dimly conscious of my crewmen engaged in a titanic struggle with the swinging boom, holding it long enough to cut a few strands, and then being sent flying as a vicious gust of wind would tear the sail and rounded timber from their grasp. Nevertheless, with each rope that we cut the sail caught less wind, and the boom at least became more manageable; although the wet and loosening canvas

cracked and flicked with wanton viciousness, laying open one man's cheek and upper chest nearly to the bone.

There was little risk to myself from the slashing cut of the sail ends; but even so my task grew harder and harder the higher I climbed and with every rope I cut, for the sail lashed and lunged more hugely with each freed stay; until, as my men below freed the last rope from the boom, the huge sail streamed out in the howling gale, straining the wooden rings around the mast to their limits; at the same time the remaining stay ropes creaked ominously, springing water under the tremendous tension.

The next moment the wind tacked a full half-circle, and a looming horror of sodden whipping sailcloth rushed at me, and in a second had flashed by in a brown stream and spun me round.

There could not have been more than another six or seven stay ropes to cut, and I — frantic in clasutrophobic fear that the sail would envelop and pin me to the mast — scrabbled recklessly up and hacked and sawed at the squeakily resistant ropes with the last vestiges of my flagging energy: four left, three, two, then only the topmost; my knife touched that last strained stay, when, to my horror, the wind screamed, swirled, and once more abruptly swung back a full half-circle. Again the sail rushed towards me even as I slashed uselessly at this last slackened rope, its billowing mass forming itself into fearsome and menacing shapes in my racing imagination.

It is impossible for me to recall accurately what then happened with such bewildering speed; all I can remember in my terror was the looming horror rushing over me, pinning and crushing me against the

mast with such force that the air was driven from my lungs; and then, before my rib cage caved in under the pressure, ripping me round and hurling me out and away and into the sea below.

What in fact happened — as I learnt from Pellafino, and the terse comments of my weary crew, after I had been hauled back on board, sodden, bleeding and battered — was that as the wind-caught sail had been hurled back, about one quarter or more of the tough cloth had struck and held me to the mast for a moment, and was then torn away by its greater bulk in the gale's grip, spinning me round like a top and flicking me off the mast like some helpless rag doll; the final stay snapping, and the sail flying on, up and over, twisting and turning in the writhing wind into weird and flexing shapes, before being caught in a down draught and flung flat on the sea, where it lay and squirmed helplessly to the rising thrust and peak of the waves. It was a terrible experience — but only a prelude of what was to come.

With the loss of the sail, the boat immediately regained its equilibrium; although the amount of water shipped caused it to roll heavily and without life, and to sit uncomfortably low in the very choppy sea. Those who had the strength bailed for their lives, while the wind-caught spume from clashing waves frequently shot over the boat — sometimes to be caught in a counter gust, broken, and whirled away or twisted and thrown onto ourselves.

It was back-breaking work, and as my crew and I recovered we joined in, using whatever utensils we had to hand. At first we made scarcely any appreciable headway, since nearly as much water cascaded back into the boat as we could throw out; but gradually we

tipped the balance in our favour, and the boat rose in the sea, and as it rose less and less water spilled back into it, and the faster we won this battle for survival. In due course we again rode high on the waves, and were sufficiently seaworthy for me to call a halt.

By this time most of us were near to exhaustion, and I watched grimly as my passengers and crew — and Pellafino too — collapsed wherever they could to recover, sprawled limply on and under the benches. My own body felt as if it had been wrung and torn from my extreme efforts on the mast; but I had a stubborn resilience, and felt keenly my responsibilities as Captain, so that even as I leant heavily on the tiller for support, with Pellafino's head resting on my chest, I looked out under the lowering clouds to the south, and into what I judged would be the very heart of the storm.

During our efforts to free the sail, the storm had loomed up on us with horrifying speed. Over our heads in a great arc of drawn darkness, to the south, and from horizon to horizon, east to west, the sky was a turbulent, ever-moving, swirling black; blacker, darker and more vicious than any sky I had ever seen in all the years I had been at sea — or perhaps what I saw has been over-weighed in my mind, determined more by the comparatively helpless instability of a tiny boat: a worm's eye view from a sliver of wood thrown and tossed hither and thither at the fierce whims of rampant nature, when before I had been used only to the swift and stable security of Mu's great ocean-going ships. I can never be certain, since we are inclined to see the greatness of nature from the varied vantage points of our own relative security; or, and more truly, from our states of advancement earned and granted.

None the less, it was beyond doubt a very savage storm that gathered so close upon us; and from our close contact with the sea in our light and fragile boat, I could not help but be struck with a paralysing fear — a fear I must at all costs hide from those dependent on my skill and leadership.

My passengers and crew, even Pellafino, were obviously numbed and bemused at the sight and feel of so much condensed and barely controlled power from the as yet unleashed storm; by the tempestuous rage of the elements as they whipped the heavy sea so easily into high peaks and deep hollows, the flying spray dashed against us by the lashing wind; and by the deep, dark clouds as they raced across the sky, spinning and twisting into ominous and spectral shapes — shapes that seemed to reflect the vast, violent and uncompromising energies of the driving inferno behind them.

I stood up, lurched forward, held firmly on to our bare mast as it swayed wildly from the choppy seas and veering winds, and spoke to them all at the top of my voice. I cannot remember a single phrase of what I said, for I spoke only from the heart and not from the mind; but I knew that the effort I put into my short, improvised speech quenched my own fears for the time, and that I had no need to practise my bravado as I strove to throw out my personality like a mantle over those in my care.

Fortunately, my inspired efforts had sufficient effect to bring about a state of calm and peace to everyone on board; enough at least to steady their minds as they listened; dully at first, but soon with an awakening life and interest. They listened, and, even under the heavily bruising impact of the raging

elements, they one and all behaved magnificently, and did so to the end which lay so near at hand.

We waited, bailers in hands, in the lee of whatever cover we could find, tossed and thrown about between waves that clashed and leapt upwards, the gale clipping off the tops of the sharply risen peaks, driving the spume over the surface of the sea, presenting an angry, dense and flattened haze, with lashing tendrils that whipped cruelly at our faces and hands, until we were all numbed, frozen and soaked through from these drenching blasts.

There was nothing more I could do to help our situation; everything that could be moved had been lashed down somehow or other, while my crew and poor castaway passengers were all crouched as low as possible in the boat, preserving as much stability as we were able, and also giving them some small shelter from the stinging spray. Pellafino adamantly refused to sit away from me as I held tightly on to the bucking tiller — more to boost and maintain morale than for any good I could do — and leaned against my body, wrapped in a blanket, with one arm about my waist.

I looked down on her head as she lay on my chest, her face pale and strained, framed by stray wisps of rich hair shining wetly from beneath the rough fringe of the blanket. I sighed, and gently caressed the fingers of my right hand down her cold face. Turning, she looked up at me and smiled, and for the last time in that life I gazed briefly into those glorious eyes, filling my heart with a host of quite inexpressible feelings which, paradoxically, served both to fill me with tremendous inner strength, and yet to sap me of any will and fight under the apparently hopeless circumstances, so that I viewed afresh our present

dangers and fears with a long-sighted, almost enigmatic acceptance of our inflexible destiny, however it guided our fortunes.

Blinking away the tears that sprang to my eyes, merging and running with the blown salt-spray, I looked quickly up and over towards the others as they sat or lay facing us from the thwarts of the boat; but even here I could not avoid discomfort, for their faces, one and all, showed the blind trust that fate had forced their hands into my keeping — I felt humbled and unworthy; but more, I felt a traitor to their trust, knowing as I did how hopelessly slim were any of our chances in escaping alive from the descending holocaust. Yet what more could I do? We were at the mercy of the elements, and perhaps what tiny alleviating skill I could exert at the helm.

Although my thoughts ran on, still my senses were alert and quite apart: so it was that I knew that the climax was at hand, and the main body and weight of the storm virtually upon us. I looked back over my shoulder, and, even as I looked, saw the outer fringes of the storm sweep across the lashed waves, straight as a ruler, and pass on over our heads, stirring the sea in muted savagery, and leaving behind it a band of deadly, unnatural calm — a calm of grotesquely heaving sea about which hung the most appalling stillness, more terrifying by far than the gusting ferocity which had passed us by.

And yet, within this dread calm the last of my fear turned to ice, and died within me: for fear in some can only really be present while there still exists some doubt or hope, however slim, to feed it; and now I knew there was no possible visible room for hope, as in the distance, approaching us with a ponderous and

irresistible pace, was a huge, darkly whirling tornado, humming to a fearsome roar as if it could scarcely contain the fantastic energy leashed within its towering column; a column, huge enough in the distance, but which grew and swelled, as it raced across the sea, until it spanned the limits of our visibility, east and west and south.

On such dramatic and momentous occasions in our lives, time itself seems to pause and stop in wonder; and as I recovered my wits and readjusted, I had only a few seconds in which to call out to any who could hear me, to hold on tightly and be ready to bale like mad when necessary, before the first whispers of wind ruffled the almost oily heave and surge of the waves, quickly followed by the full weight of the howling, screaming tornado, even as I pulled Pellafino closer in a grip that I determined could only be broken by death.

That first blast of rain-carrying, maddened wind hit us like the wall of a cliff, and I will never know how our boat ever survived its impact; I can only think that the very fragility and lightness of our craft, when cast against the huge might of the sea and wind, enabled it to ride over the thrusting strength of the sea, bend before the ferocity of the wind, and save us from being immediately hurled out, capsized and drowned.

Even so, we heeled over, further and further, the sea running in freely over the gunwale as we spun stern to the wind; and then, just as I knew the boat could take no more, we slid down the leeward side of the mountainous wave that bore us, effectively cutting off the howling wind.

"Bale! — bale for your lives!" I screamed into the heavy haze of spray, though I could only see for a yard

or so before me, so bad was the visibility in that moment, and set myself to throwing water over the side from a large tin cup.

At the same time I dropped down into the thwarts, pulling Pellafino with me, away from the horribly exposed and untenable position on the stern bench. I could still reach the swinging tiller, but doubted very much if the effort was worth the risk of being picked up and cast overboard by the belt of the gale, or the flick and lash of a wave; events were moving too fast, while the wind governed our course so completely that I could not visualize the rudder as being of any positive use at all under the circumstances.

Dimly, my senses recorded the sensation of dropping — down and down we sank into the pit of what looked like a moving mountain of water; and when I glanced up from bailing, I was met with a sight that few people have ever lived to report, and which, through the long ages, I still remember now in deeply scarred, claustrophobic nightmares of that awful scene, and our brief fight for survival in the storm thereafter: 'Above us loomed the vast grey waves, majestic, sloping, moving cliffs of water that temporarily cut us off from the savage power of the howling wind, fleecing the tops of every wave in its path of devastation, carrying with it horizontal rivers of salt-spray which shut out much of the light, leaving us apparently entombed in the bottom of a watery grave.'

Then we began to rise on the breast of a neighbouring giant, and so fast and strongly that we were pressed hard against the thwarts under the added gravitational lift; only to be struck once more by the tremendous force of the gale as we pierced the roof of light-impeding, wind-blown spray, crushed and spun

by buffeting fists of demonic, unseen fury.

Blinded by spray and haze, battered by the terrible gale, dropped, twisted and lifted on vast combers, it became quite impossible to maintain any sense of direction, or even inclination, in the midst of this madness of sea and wind. I concentrated only on holding Pellafino with one hand and arm, the other wrapped around the centre bench support; I was also aware of the child lying in the bottom of the crazily bucking boat, his arms clamped tightly about my left leg in a pathetic condition of stunned fear.

As to the fate of the rest of my people, I cannot say; but only surmise and assume that they must have been washed overboard, either by the first punching impact of the tornado, or at any time later as we clung briefly and hopelessly to life. I could no longer help them, there was nothing more I could do; indeed, my own World had shrunk suddenly — physically and mentally — to a space of a yard or two about me, to the stanchion to which I clung, the hard-ridged bottom of the boat in which several hundred gallons of water sloshed freely to and fro, to Pellafino and the poor frightened child, and the dizzy whirling, the rising and sinking, as one giant after another rolled ponderously towards us; but above all, perhaps, to the screaming, slamming threnody of the wind in one moment, shortly followed by the hissing silence of our sliding entombment.

Vaguely, as if in another World, I grew dimly aware of frightened spirits about me, lonely and lost; and that with each slide down from the crest of a wave to its awesome pit, there seemed fewer people in the boat, fewer white faces, and more fear in the air — until at last I saw nobody; only the whimpering boy who clung on to me, and Pellafino to whom I clung,

fearful lest she should be cast over the side, caught in the wind and torn away with the flying spray.

There could be no thought of bailing under such conditions, when it was not even possible to think, one's mind clubbed into submission, and when an arm or a leg moved and exposed too much only ran the risk of being caught in the gale, and its owner dragged and hurled over the side. In consequence we lay still, or as still as we might under the pitching and tossing, and series of juddering crashes that intermittently shook every beam in our boat, my muscles taut and strained as I strove to hold on for the three of us.

God alone knows how long we drifted in that mad maelstrom, at the complete mercy of wind and wave, with the water steadily rising in the boat until we remained drenched from above and below, and were forced to drag ourselves to a slightly higher position as far under the sheltering stern seat as I could manage. Here I was able to wedge my body and take the child into the embrace of my freed arm; a position he very readily occupied with an easier mind, if with less bodily comfort in the cramped space.

With the weight of our water ballast, we sat lower in the sea with less risk of being capsized; but as the level of water rapidly rose, our gunwales sank under the additional weight, and greater quantities of sea spray and broken waves cascaded on to us, or lipped freely over the edges as we rolled and dipped heavily like a sodden log.

I looked at Pellafino in a moment when the bows were driven high in the air, and as we were sliding backwards down the flank of yet another monstrous wave, the water rushing towards the stern, over our

legs and up our bodies, forcing us to strain upwards with our heads in order to breathe at all; and her eyes were dark and deep, her face a deathly pallor; yet in those depths I read something at least of life and death, and of the immediate future.

It was very peculiar — or so, I suppose, it would be understood by most people; but I have always had the gift of reading through the apparent and into the reality behind; and, with such a mistress of Life as Pellafino, I was not unused to these brief and seering insights into the pulsating, throbbing heart of Eternity.

I bent my head and kissed her pale forehead, the storm forgotten in those vivid and revealing moments, my heart dead and cold and fearless for myself, dragged down by my knowledge of her coming transition.

"Peter," I saw her lips move coldly, though I heard no sound.

Bending low again I pressed my ear against her lips — "Peter," she whispered again, "save the child, hold tightly to him."

I felt her cold lips brush my cheek, and then — "Remember, I am yours and yours only for ever, for we are one; hold on to this, Peter, hold on to it fast."

At that moment there was the most frightful, jarring crash; not the sort of sea-muscle blows to which we had been subjected, for these had some spring and resilience to them, but the sort of crash that could only come from a sudden and violent impact with some hard and immovable object.

The three of us were thrown wildly about, and my head cracked sharply against the stern seat as I strove

vainly to hold on to the boat, maintain my grips on Pellafino and the child, and avoid the miniature tidal wave which rushed down upon us as the stern dropped, but the bows remained high in the air.

The blow must have knocked me out for a few seconds; yet during this very brief period of helplessness I remained conscious, although not in control of my body, and was immediately aware that I stood outside of myself, watching events in very slow motion.

'Time breathed deeply and slowly as I saw my hands involuntarily loosen, and the three of us thrown against the side of the boat; the child to rebound back on to myself, but Pellafino caught by the tip of a wave, and swept limply overboard.

'In a dragging nightmare of agony, I screamed and screamed out my tortured heart; but even my cries were restricted to the slowed pace of the moment, and my voice dragged on and on as she was taken out of my sight, away from me and under the majestic tramp of a huge, curling roller, its action graceful and invincible in its slow, even sweep and remorseless power.'

Then, without warning, I was peremptorily snatched back into my body and full consciousness, still screaming uncontrollably, while holding on to the dazed and terrified boy; watching in horror as the bows of our boat, gripped high over our heads, split open to allow the tearing intrusion of a sharp pointed rock where no rock should ever have been.

Somehow I pulled myself together and stopped screaming hysterically; though quite how I will never know, since the shock of Pellafino's loss of life and presence were immediate and tremendous — perhaps

the boy's safety, my own trained instincts, and those last words from Pellafino, enabled me to draw on deeper reserves of strength than I knew were in me?

For the moment the boat was held firmly on the sharp spike of rock; although I realized this could not hold long under the immense surge and battering of the waves, each one shaking us from broken stem to stern, accompanied by splitting cracks and rifts as she opened up like a rotten fruit before my eyes.

Dragging the wretched child to his feet, we scrambled together up the shuddering slope of the boat, away from the water-logged stern and up towards the bows, struck by heavy douches of flying spray, and shaken about by the ravaging storm that smashed and swung at the poor remnant of our boat, built with such painstaking care on Mu.

Rocks meant solidity and land, and between the sporadic hails of spray and rearing combers I could just discern the great, grey bulk of what appeared to be a low cliff in the immeasurable distance.

It was extremely difficult to clamber up the boat, inclined as she was at nearly forty-five degrees, under the appalling conditions. Exhausted and worn out, I would have found it a trying task alone and unencumbered; as it was I was deeply shocked, wet through, frozen and virtually at the point of collapse, and having to hold on to this poor lad who was scarcely in any better condition than myself.

Gradually we made it, driven on by sharp cracks as the shifting boat tore apart under our very feet and hands, but only by dint of what I hoped was an urgent, encouraging tone of voice to the fear-stricken child, and a careless disregard of cuts and bruises brought about by frequently slipping back and falling on to the

hard benches and the sharp edges of stanchions.

The rock, on which the bows had crashed and were gripped, was of enormous help once we had managed to circumnavigate and clamber around its bulk, since it was then comparatively easy to stand on its firm side, reach up to the broken bows, and then pull and wriggle ourselves forward and up until at last we perched astride the riven timbers.

Our positions were still very insecure and temporary; for although we were above the mean level of the sea, we were still far below the great curling waves as they rolled in from the ocean, over the breaking boat and ourselves, and on through an array of widely-spaced, jagged rocks, crumbling into what appeared to be a bay of easy swelling water. Beyond this I could not see, since the sky was dark and black, and my sight was further obscured by the heavy haze of salt-spray, and the shadow cast by the cliff, making it almost impossible to pick out the sort of shore which lay at its foot.

I held the boy tightly against me, gripping with all my strength on the heavy timbers to avoid being dashed from our precarious perch under the rhythmic deluge of heavy seas which crashed relentlessly over us, leaving us like two half-drowned rats after every immersion; a little weaker, a little more battered and dazed, and that much nearer to extinction when our boat finally broke up and collapsed.

Yet between these salty immersions of dragging, tearing strain, I managed to scan the land and the hoped-for bay that lay ahead of us, concluding that our only hope lay in taking our chances with these two.

We had to reach the shore somehow, and even as the second wave rolled over us, my mind was made up

on this only course of action left open to follow. Consequently, I watched with keen interest while that same wave flowed on over the tops of the rocks, crumbling about ten yards before the landward barrier of the jagged reef, whose ugly protrusions rose sharply above the creamed foam as it rushed frothing between the remaining pinnacles, its sibilant hiss audible even above the giant sounds of the storm.

As I thought and watched, I acted: smiling at the poor lad, then shouting at him to come, I pulled him off the broken bow before he had any time in which to think and grow afraid. Holding him firmly by the hand, we leapt out and struck the choppy sea on the lee side of the boat, thrust off the wooden planking, and swum slowly towards the fearsome array of ragged, crustaceous rocks, striving vainly in the grip of strong cross-currents to line up for a route which would enable us to slide harmlessly between them.

But it was hopeless; the sea pulled us first one way and then another, and I was forced to content myself with treading water, encouraging the lad to do likewise.

We had not long to wait: poised above the torn and splintered remnants of our boat was an enormous wave, purring towards us with a monolithic serenity, only the gale capping its calm progress by snipping off its slightly tapering hump, driving a horizontal sheet of spray over our heads.

"Turn to the shore — keep your face up — paddle hard as you can — don't worry, I'll keep hold of you!" I shouted at the boy, snatching breaths whenever possible as the fitful wind petulantly lashed water into my face with a more than aggravating persistence.

He was a bright lad — though, foolishly, I could not

even recall his name in that moment. At any rate he understood me well enough, and we paddled furiously on with a sort of odd crablike side-stroke, our bodies together, front to back, and my left arm encircling his waist so that we could not easily be parted.

I watched warily as the monstrous wave rolled over the boat, and on and on to us. A moment later we were lifted up, higher and higher, gathered by the mountain of water and racing towards the array of rocks which lay in front and below us, our legs and arms kicking and pulling with all our strength to keep us on the crest of the already climbing, curling roller, and so as not to slide back into its hollow and run the risk of almost certain impalement on the wicked edges below.

Events raced, and with it my mind and acuteness of observation in those few, brief, critical seconds in which it took us to ride over the grim muster of urchin-encrusted, underwater hazards. From our high, sweeping perch, and looking just above the wind-blown sheet of spray, I saw the land more clearly: a low undulating cliff; a short sandy beach; trees and dense greenery — and then we sank with that peculiar collapsing feeling one experiences when riding a crumbling wave; very uncomfortable and disconcerting to those unused to the sea and surf, but a rather exciting and subtle test of inner stability, timing and judgement.

As estimated, our broken, rushing giant let us down about ten yards within the reef's inner edge; and, in blurred horror, I had to watch almost helplessly as we shot forward in a steep descending line, sharp-cutting rocks emerging and slicing the hurl of water to either side of us. There was no time for reflective thought,

none even for fear to take any root; we struck out frantically, our every effort spent to avoid being abraded or smashed head-on against any of those wickedly cruel obstructions.

Although my shoulder was scraped open as we slid too close to one rock, and another slit my only garment as I shoved ourselves off in passing; in fact the surging force of the broken wave was our best friend, since not only did it carry us over those remaining ten yards at an alarming pace, but — as is the way of fast-moving water over a broken bed — its flow was deviated and guided to hurtle between the immovable obstructions, twisting and deflecting, so that even had we lain helpless as logs, it would have been almost impossible for us to have crashed directly into any of those sharp and multi-faceted peaks.

In a cream of foam we were through and in deeper water, though still carried forward by the wave's force as it evened out into a slow, heavy swell running towards the shore. I looked back to see if there was any sign left of our boat; but could see nothing, save the edge of a seething, boiling sea, its mountainous waves sheeted in hard-flung spray, casting a watery haze over much of the reef through which we had just been carried.

It was possible to pick out the shoreline far more clearly now, as we lifted and sunk on the heaving rollers that swelled smoothly in to pound on a short, steep beach about three hundred yards from where we floated.

An easy enough swim for either of us had we been fresh, notwithstanding the heavy sea, its strength splintered by the reef against which most of its remaining power had been spent, nor the slashing

wind that veered and swirled as it struck the cliff, wailing and humming like a lost soul as it flew into crevices, laced through bent trees, and flailed its airy arms impotently in hollow, thrumming disarray when pounding at some sealed and empty funnel through which it could not pass.

These sounds bit into my tired mind even as I encouraged the boy, and wearily trod water for us both while he recovered his strength and nerve. I turned my head seawards once more, drawn by some subtle force, and scanned keenly the open space of ocean where we had been, and for some fifty yards to either side, my eyes slitting as they strove to penetrate the haze of spray.

At first I saw nothing but the wild and savage ocean, of which I had already seen overmuch for my liking; but then, just as I was about to turn away, my eyes were held like magnets on to a wonderfully strange sight, fleeting in the green curl of a wave, yet such as to impress itself indelibly on the retinas of my mind.

The riven bows and forepeak of our boat had loosened from the rock that held them, and were sliding in on an up-swelling sea; breaking apart as I watched, turning and twisting in the curl of a roller. But above, in the thin, translucent green of the wave, with the sky's dim light behind, I saw the grey shape of a bottle-nose dolphin, as if wrapped in Neptune's arms, swimming easily along in the risen, unbroken wave. Then, above the dolphin, through the wind-sheeted spray, I gazed for a moment on the face of Pellafino; framed in glistening nodules of water borne on the wind, and with a light not quite of this Earth, her long hair streaming in the gale as she

smiled on me; but oh, how sad and lonely and winsome was her smile.

Then both she and the dolphin were gone, and all I could see were the angry sea and the wind-whipped spray. Nothing remained in me but that poignant scene, and my broken and empty heart. I knew not how to contain myself, so sharp was the agony of excision; for although by no means did I fully understand what I had seen, yet I did know beyond any shadow of doubt that Pellafino's path through Life, and mine own, were henceforth destined to follow different roads for aeons to come.

I felt this thought bite deep inside me, and in that moment it did not help that I had known that this would come about — for I was already exhausted and outworn, and could not view the long ages which lay ahead, with its trials and tribulations, with anything like equanimity; I knew only that I must tread the long gamut of Life if ever I was to emerge and win back my Pellafino, my heart and the whole of myself.

From that moment all the pent-up love within me could not be stilled, would not lie quiet and dormant; but had to come out, live, create and flower in beauty and strength. So it was that my heart's strength poured out towards this boy, this waif in my care — Perhaps this love was never truly his to hold, only Pellafino's? yet he was not to know this, poor child, and nor was he the loser; since from these fires of my love fed the spark of his own, until at length the spark grew and burst into a flame and life of its own . . . But I am thinking out of time; I must look on ahead — ahead — ahead —

The man and the boy swam slowly and tiredly on towards the shore; and I watched them as they drew

away from me, and I from them, until even the thunder of the great storm was lost, and these two stilled in the mists of time.

* * * * *

"And so you started on your road of voluntary redemption," said a calm, even voice behind me.

I swung round in surprise — I had forgotten where I was — to meet the steady gaze of our guide; and next to him, Pellafino, looking a little pale and strained after watching our joint pasts through my eyes, my thoughts, and my heart.

I was speechless, for although my full self and powers were returning, still my transition on this occasion had been so smooth and easy, that I was scarcely aware of having been drawn away from all the violence through which I had lived again.

"You acquitted yourself well, my son," went on our guide, smiling warmly.

There being nothing to say, I clasped his hand in mine; and then turned and drew Pellafino tightly into my embrace.

By now the past and the present, and all that had occurred since we had left the cliff-girt shores of south-west England, were flooding back into my mind, together with a host of questions.

From our guide's emanations I saw that he knew already most, if not all, of my thoughts; none the less, he said only — "Ask what you will, and I will answer you if I may."

For a moment more I remained silent, gathering my thoughts; then asked quietly — "What happened to the little boy? did he live?"

"Indeed, yes; you were together on that island for thirteen years after the day you dragged yourselves ashore, and eleven years after the total submersion of Mu. He grew up to be a fine man under your guidance and care, one in whom the light of love burned brightly — both for you, and, though less directly, for God whom neither of you rightly or wholly knew at that stage."

"And what of Pellafino, my father? of her and the dolphin I saw in the wave?"

"That is a question which you can answer already," replied our guide, somewhat obscurely; "but not, perhaps, that God's souls are often destined to follow widely divergent paths according to their individual needs and requirments. Thus — you two, being one — it became necessary for Pellafino to progress along a high, narrow path, drawing from it all the richness that she could; but for you to follow another, broader and rougher; thereby, in the nearing completion of this age on Earth, combining each other's advancement, uniting, and then moving forward together into a new, enhanced state."

I thought our guide was going to reveal more; but he stopped, and I was conscious of a shield that seemed to fall between his glowing mind and my own unspoken questions.

He sighed lightly before concluding — "You must understand that Man has in him the potential of Godhead; therefore, because of this tremendous gift, Man's spirit is destined — not fated," he added firmly — "to inhabit, experience and expand in far wider states and conditions than is naturally and commonly thought."

I nodded, and Pellafino smiled at me encouragingly.

But still my tongue was inhibited; for the sort of questions plaguing me were so broad and indefinitely formed that I felt at a loss to express them, especially so as they implied comparisons and events which I was shy to display or enter into, not knowing how to avoid their subtle impacts along the stony route of my questions.

"You need have no fear of your searching bewilderment, Peter," said our guide in response to my unmoulded thoughts; "for I can read their trend in the clarity of your heart. But I cannot answer them fully and directly, since they contain seeds from the very heart of Life, and such you must discover for yourself; many, indeed, you know already, or else they lie in embryonic wait.

"However, I can deepen your knowledge through reflection. Look both of you on the screen for the last time, and listen carefully to my words — you will not forget them when you return to your Earth."

Hand in hand, Pellafino and I looked as bidden; and I, at least, was deeply struck by the gravity and resonance in our guide's voice.

Light gathered and converged within the screen, forming itself into a picture of our World as seen from space — blue, clean and beautiful.

"That is how your World is as God made it," came our guide's voice as from a great distance; "pure and unsullied. Now let us draw closer and see, through Man's thoughts and deeds, all that he has accomplished and destroyed."

Silently, swiftly and effortlessly we sped down to the Earth far below; and as we flew on I grew conscious of a subtle change in my sight; no longer did I see the natural colours and shapes, but rather only those

which sprang from the mental emanations of Man, so that the World and its lands presented a very different scene from that of its natural reality.

But I am at a sorry loss to divide the indivisible; to reduce the fullness of thousands of years into crude human terminology; to grasp at, and portray before you — my reader — in sensible literate form, a lucid description of all we saw and learned I think it hardly possible, if only because its almost limitless completeness makes it so; and how to encompass and capture the pure Alpha and developing Omega of such scenes? Surely such a task is beyond the scope of mind and pen as the servants of knowledge and experience? unless — unless only eyes have seen, and hearts have read, sufficient of the simple mysteries of Life to form a rock of Truth; a rock upon which one can climb and build, and build and climb to greater heights and wider vistas.

Thus, all I can do is to relate briefly the very surface of what we saw, and couple such seering glimpses with some of our guide's enlightening words; hoping that these together may give at least a slender thread for the perceptive eye to follow.

We swept down lower and lower; until, like an eagle hovering high above, we watched as the World spun redly under a heavily striated carbon fog, basely grey and drifting slowly in whorls, each one separate, yet most similar in pattern and thread to our hyper-sensitive eyes; while woven intricately through the whorling, bulging grey were twined a myriad multi-coloured lines, each one reflecting some part in the complexities of human nature, each one a thought, a pattern and a deed; fantastic shapes, which although I could not read them properly — still

imparted to me some ideas and motives that left their mark for later recognition and reflection.

Colours — joined, tinged, merged; running, twisting, flowing; everywhere lines of colours that mirrored the spiritual, mental and physical in Man; his rare purity in gold, lines of fleeting wisdom in yellow, clarity in blue, nobility in purple, effort in orange, anger in red, and cunning guile in a sickly green.

And what tremendous depths could be read from the myriad combinations of merging shades; shades that lived in shining clarity, others that drifted in broad, fat lines, and so many more that I could never remember or describe their intricacies — colours I had never seen before; patterns so formed, cunningly bent and turned, that no living man could have read their intricately crafted designs.

My mind reeled before all this vast accumulation of stored thoughts and experiences, past, present, and even something of the future. We fell back, too, before the fronds of grey fog that reached up and touched our beings, encircling us with a stench at once old, fusty, sour, airless and stifling.

Death and blindness crept insidiously over us, and, what was even more terrifying, we were cunningly anaesthetized and drawn towards a vortex of darkness and hate, indifference and greed . . . The screen grew darker, greyer and denser, until, as we became more tightly bound, we felt even the refined strength and beauty within us being made captive and dragged away into the consuming fog beneath.

Taking Pellafino's hand firmly into mine, I pulled her back and snapped off the vision — "What is this?" I cried in alarm to our guide, who stood

imperturbably at my side.

"Wait and watch some more as we move around the World; and remember, nothing can harm you, only fear existent within yourselves can prove an effective link between you and the powers of darkness," he replied calmly, throwing an effective damper on my momentary panic.

With some reluctance we turned back to the screen; although with active memories of our boat from Mu, and the perils of the storm, I held on to Pellafino lest, peradventure, I should lose her through some other and more subtle means.

We passed swiftly over every main body of land on the whole Earth, and from each we drew varying, partially understood impressions; but these were so swift, so faceted, and so full in content, that they provided a food fit only for consumption through our higher, less tangible senses that constitute the ultimate us, and on which we sometimes briefly touch through our subconscious minds — but can only truly and wholly hold when the binding knots of natural life are loosed.

This is not to say that our vision was wasted; for what is stored in the receptive, greater us, must emerge at length in actions and deeds, while their understanding follows when the earth-bound mind is sufficiently strong and complete to receive and encompass them . . . So it was with Pellafino and myself, and we would not have had it otherwise.

Thus we saw, and much, much more than we saw we absorbed into our inner selves: A useless spectrum of colours, whirling fogs, and soft and jagged lights? I think not, although I must admit to being drenched and bewildered at the time by most of what we saw

and experienced; yet through it all I sensed great forces that lay beneath; and furthermore, when our scene stood back from the World, I was clearly conscious primarily of the dense grey fog and the angry red, underlying haze — the former negative, insidious and damping; the latter positive, but generally coarse and evil, or at least the ready tool of evil.

We turned to our guide for enlightenment, who, with a graceful sweep of his hand across the screen, extinguished the scenes before our eyes.

"My children," he began kindly, "do not fret and berate yourselves because you cannot understand much of what you have just been shown. The past you have learned to see into, grasp clearly and relate to the present, because you have lived long and advanced well; so, too, with a little help, it is not hard for you to assimilate and draw knowledge from these relived, condensed experiences.

"The actual present and the near future are also within your scope and understanding, since in these you have merely a projection of the past and present; besides which you can see with your own eyes, hear with your own ears, and understand with yourselves as you are in the same moments in time.

"As you have just seen in reflection; the present as a whole, and as a consequence, result, and cause, of the past and future, is very much harder to reach and understand — for its complexities have long tentacles drawing deeply from both sides of the coin of Life, the positive and the negative; although in fact, when combined, you are both approaching to a level when your eyes are ready to be opened more widely, and your hearts to understanding these deeper mysteries

which relate so closely to the redemption of Man."

He paused for a moment, and then went on — "You saw only as much as you could absorb in these moments, and in fact only a fraction of what there is to know; in due course you will read much more in the quiet peace of meditation, and, layer by layer, the veils that cover your eyes now will be stripped away as you conquer and progress, until you will not only see with the far eyes of an eagle, but understand with greater love and pity the true worth of the dark planet — the name by which your World is known at this stage of its development — and the Life that seeks to gain entry and redeem it from itself.

"Your World is sicker than ever before, and rapidly declining towards an end and a beginning. That grey fog you saw over so much of the Earth is, in essence, the dark cloud of Man's ignorance — drawn from his own moral decay and wrong thinking, and rooted more deeply by his loss of a sense of sin, accumulated sometimes to a completely blinding density; and then, further back, into his rejection of God and his solitary faith in himself alone.

"Some people do think, but most only in accordance with their own convenience or expediency, and too few with a clear head and a true motivation to seek out only truth and reality. Especially is this so of people who live in the more sophisticated, highly populated communities in your World; they become unreachable, hiding behind their own hypocritical facades of greed and self-glorification, incentives which thicken in time into hard, insulating shells that bear them to the ground, drawn back to their natural mother, the earth, and from which few will ever raise their sights, no matter the glory that reigns above.

These people," and our guide's voice was very terrible, "will have committed the irrevocable sin against the Holy Ghost, since from the wilful squalor of their minds they can only see Life at the low level of their own thoughts; no longer do they have even the ability to recognize the false from the true at any state and in any form, for they have become slaves to a myriad wayward values which together have quenched their flames of spirit given to them in the beginning. Thus is Mankind now faced with a vast emptiness of soul amidst some of the densest populations in the World.

"The dark red you saw underlying the grey over most of the World, mingled or alone, heavy or light, and usually overlaid with many other subtle colours, is fundamentally a reflection of the natural, crude energy in Man; an energy readily available for use by evil intent, as shown by the cunning lines of sickly green which twined about with craft and guile.

"Likewise is the orange also a reflection of energy, though more refined; while the flecks of yellow are signs of Man's intellectual activities, albeit often misguided and misaligned; and, finally, the occasional gleams of gold reflect the ultimate purity in Man, within his bounds on Earth.

"Between these colours were spectrums of tones, part-tones and shades, which I know escaped your untrained sight; let alone all the moving patterns and markings that you have not yet the skill to read accurately.

"Now, Peter, for you especially, since it is time for you to start your journey back to your World with Pellafino — you will return as you were, a child, and your young mind will not apparently carry much of

what you have seen, nor of what I have said. Even so, you will have within you a deep memory of all that you have learned; although, in fact, this is naught but a consolidation of what you have already acquired within yourselves, for it runs counter to the laws of Life that anyone may be lifted above their earned state; remember this in the future — you have not been raised above yourselves, only to your limits at this moment; also that these limits to your sights are a sure indication of the boundary of your combined advancement.

"Farewell, remember my words and what you have seen; in time you will clothe their starkness with a richness and beauty of your own . . . God be in you both."

Hand in hand we turned towards each other, like two children; for by then that is how we felt towards our guide, who was so obviously far above ourselves. But no words came, indeed, in truth we had none left to say who had already been nearly overwhelmed by events, and the deluge of knowledge and love in various forms, and who also knew how thoroughly this great personage understood our minds and hearts.

He smiled on us with great gentleness and warmth, lifted his right arm and hand in blessing — and was gone in the same moment beyond where we could follow.

Both Pellafino and I had been arriving at a growing realization that we had been running the risk of becoming tired and worn in time; for both of us had roots reaching back almost to the birth of Man on Earth, and there were not so many main-line paths of experiences of which I had not had at least some passing encounter. Now there remained no air of

staleness, and we were both deeply refreshed and strengthened for what we knew were the final stresses and strains we would have to endure in this closing chapter of the World, a chapter over-filled with evils and horrors conjured by Man in his final bid for earthly power.

"My dearest, you must lead me back," I said quietly to Pellafino, who seemed lost and wrapped in wonder, but who yet glowed with a depth of beauty I had not seen before, and which set fresh spurs into my spinning heart.

She nodded, appeared about to reply, but instead looked into me with such an expression of sweetness and enigmatic mystery, that I wondered how ever I could have earned such a love as hers. Even so, there was an oddness, some thought in her head which apparently she wished to hide from me; I could feel it, but did not question her for the complete trust that lay between us, and that my own selfish heart was already bounding with joy.

She reached up, put her soft arms round my neck, and pressed her warm lips to mine.

In that same instant of embrace we were flashing through dimensions and time, down through denser airs to the cove on our twin planet of Anti-Matter.

* * * * *

Once again I looked down at my own child's body, as it lay asleep on the rock just above the enclosed pool of sea water. It seemed to be all right, remarkably healthy in fact; but so crude and unrefined when compared to our present more celestial forms.

No matter; it had a functional beauty of its own,

and I would seek to grace it with an inner light. Confidently, I stepped towards the small frame as it lay so lonely and so empty, looked back at Pellafino who stood watching, clothed in radiant appeal; then — from my reawakened founts of knowledge — elevated myself, until I lay directly above and in immediate line with my child's body on the sun-warmed rock below.

For a moment I hovered there, then sank down into my more restricted bounds, absorbing myself as a wisp of ether into every part of the child A flash of light, a band of black, and I was as I had been — save that stored in my memory, out of reach for the time being, lay the reins to Life and knowledge, ready for use when I had the maturity and skill to take them in my hands.

I leaped to my feet like a scalded cat, feeling frightened and alone after having slept so long, for I saw that the sun was fast sinking in the east.

'In the east?' I thought wildly — and then remembered. "Pellafino!" I called; "Pellafino, where are you?" I shouted, looking over the edge of the rock on which I had lain, and into the swelling and sinking water beneath.

Frantically, my eyes searched the pool; for it must be remembered that I had no memory whatsoever of all that had passed since I had been nudged, exhausted, on to the hard dry bed where I had slept.

Then I saw her: a swirl near the underwater entrance, and the grey, scarred shape of my dolphin as she swam gracefully round the wall of the cove, just under the surface, and followed by a cleft vee of disturbed water as she glided to a stop beneath my feet, squeaking invitingly, and in what struck me as a

rather plaintive note.

I dived into the cold sea-pool without any hesitation, and swam to her where she waited for me, the icy chill striking deep and cold into my thin frame. Gasping, I grabbed hold of Pellafino's dorsal fin, and once again felt the thrum of her energy being poured into me — driving the cold out of my body from the warmth of her own, acclimatizing me in some mysterious way to the sea and its movements, and filling me with a flexible strength far beyond my normal limits.

We swam round the pool once only, before diving down and sweeping through the narrow, underwater entrance and into the great sea beyond.

As before, I thrilled to this novel and lovely mode of progression, undulating my torso and legs to suit the limbered ease of Pellafino's movements.

We swam more slowly than before, and I wondered why, while urging Pellafino to greater speed and higher leaps; but she would not alter her pace, preferring rather to hold back in reserve as much of her strength and mine as she could — and again I wondered.

At length we drew near to the time-split area towards which Pellafino had been heading, and experienced the same curious phenomena as we had before — though this time the alien power at work on us was that of our own World. None the less, until we passed this barrier, its power was in antipathy to our present states, while yet drawing us on, gradually closing the doors on the vivid colours about us.

Suddenly I did not want to go back to my World, and yelled at Pellafino to stop and turn back to the shore and the cave we had left; back into this better

World which was so much more beautiful, clean and undefiled; back to a place where we could be happy and free, even if we never saw anyone else, but just lived together in play, peace and perfect harmony.

But all my pleadings were to no avail, and Pellafino — with soothing clicks and whistles, and a veritable tornado of thought transference — was firm: we must go on; come what may our future lay ahead of us on the dark planet, sister to the light we were leaving behind.

I felt ashamed and fell silent, while Pellafino coursed through the brilliant sea, this way and then that, searching for the thin rift in time that we — in our comparatively clumsy states — must use to travel down the corridors of space.

Suddenly, without warning, we were on it: in a flashing moment I was cast into utter darkness, and an almost instantaneous change and reversal of all my physical components, and then hurled out into space with enormous force and tremendous speed.

* * * * *

Once more we were swimming round in circles; only this time drawing away from the magnetic power of Anti-Matter which slipped through this slit in time. At first everything was drab and dull to me, while the heavy sighing atmosphere of men's thoughts, even that distance out at sea, afflicted my senses grown accustomed to purer and more refined ethers.

But my memory was quickly erased, and before long I was almost happy again as we purred and swished through the rolling sea — almost, but not quite, for something troubled me while we sped through the

water as fast as Pellafino judged I could stand, and far faster than we had travelled out towards the time-split area on our counterpart World I wondered at all this in my child's mind, but knew with the keen sensitivity of youth not to question Pellafino, although I could never have rationalized why.

Time passed, miles watered away beneath us, and the stark granite cliffs we had left so long ago were now clearly in view, rising high above the horizon, perhaps three miles off; but meanwhile my arms and body had become intolerably weary and stiff. I thought my acute distress to Pellafino, and she — almost reluctantly I felt — slowed and stopped.

I could feel the tension in Pellafino, and also the burdens of tiredness and age dragging on her from towing me so fast on this final swim to shore. In spite of my own distress, as I gasped for breath and flexed my aching limbs, my heart bled for this big friend of mine who, for some good reason, was rashly spending the last of her magnificent strength to get me back to shore.

My mind was in a whirl of perplexity, accompanied soon by even more concern as I felt the gentle thrum of Pellafino's strength pouring out from her, and into me, still further draining her diminished resources; yet I was nearly helpless, and could only soak her vitality to re-energize my own dried-out and wasted strength, until soon I was almost fully recovered, and she stopped.

Again we lay still in the water, rising and sinking with the waves; and as we rose and fell I grew keenly aware of an intense and tremendous love for this dolphin of mine, together with an overwhelming desire to do something for her, to give her something of

myself. I realized dimly, and with little reason, the terrible drain I had been on Pellafino's strength and energy, especially so on this final swim to shore. She was old and tired, I knew it, and was also afraid of something beyond my comprehension.

Of course, our easy telepathic communication enabled her to pick up my unpremeditated thoughts without any difficulty, and in return I felt the warm embrace of her great mind about me — unspoken, but complete, leaving no room for any doubts or questions.

When she had rested a little longer, we continued our swim on towards the cliff and my cove, increasing speed, until once more we dived through the rollers, rippling and flicking our way in their moving depths, springing out over the hollows, traced by streams of silver droplets flying from our curved sides.

In a very short time we had halved the remaining distance to the shore, and my earlier unshaped fears and dark premonitions began to fade into the background.

Then, while curling through the air, and to my shrinking horror, I spotted three menacing, streamlined, vee-shaped fins slicing through the sea parallel to the coast, and between us and the shore.

I cannot say whether Pellafino saw the sharks at the same instant as I did, or whether she plucked the thought from my head in its moment of birth; however, before she had burst from the depth of the very next wave, she had executed a graceful turn to the left, heading behind and around the three voracious ocean wolves.

As we burst, curving from the sea, our speed and rhythm unchanged, I watched the sharks in the few,

brief sporadic moments I had when I could see over the waves. For a while they remained on their original course, but on our third lift into the air I saw the three fins narrow as they turned towards us, and in that moment I knew they meant to hunt us to our deaths.

Sharks will only rarely interfere with the faster, nimbler and more intelligent dolphin, especially in the case of the larger bottle-nose, who if pressed is well capable of wounding or even killing a shark.

In reflection, I can only think that these sharks' highly developed sensory mechanisms had picked up a certain degree of imbalance in Pellafino's rhythmic thrusts, hampered as she was by my weight and drag; for these ancient scavengers of the sea are very quick to sense even the slightest signs of distress.

At any rate, I never even considered reasons at the time, since I was kept busy 'shark spotting' in the brief moments when I could see, and then events and the sharks themselves were moving and closing in on us at such speeds as to leave no time to spare for idle reflection.

Pellafino maintained her course and undiminished speed, drawing ever nearer to the coast, with our cove not much more than a quarter of a mile away to my half-right, and the nearest part of the craggy coastline about two-thirds of that distance.

Then, without warning, Pellafino began to pour out a steady stream of closely interjected, high-pitched squeaks; at the same time sending me, by means of telepathy, a few simple clear-cut instructions. In spite of my natural fear for us both, I felt as thrilled as if I had been enmeshed in the throes of some complex naval manoeuvres. Still, I held on to my cool sanity, and to Pellafino's dorsal fin with all the remaining

strength I had in my arms and hands, bracing myself for the sharp and rapid turns which I knew would follow at any moment.

The distance closed rapidly between the sharks and ourselves — a hundred yards, fifty, twenty. The blood began to burn coldly in my veins, for they were huge monsters racing towards us in an almost perfect line abreast. Then two of them began to turn, the sea hissing through their partially opened mouths and serrated back-slanting teeth; but the only sounds I heard were the swirling rush and turbulence past our flying bodies, the swelling thud of the sharks' powerful tails as they drove through the water like a triad of express trains, and the steady, repetitive stream of squeaks from Pellafino — not at all unlike the pings of an Asdic counter, only far faster and more highly pitched.

Then with the sharks' cold basilisk eyes, gleaming teeth and smooth white underbellies, sending shuddering thrills of horror through me, and just in the split second when I thought we had left it too late, Pellafino rippled into a supple and exquisitely controlled turn of about seventy degrees, flipped and curved with perfect timing into the mounting rise of the roller on which the three sharks rushed, then shot between and under them on an opposite course, leaving their mooned tails and whitened wakes fanning out in a vee towards the open sea, while we ripped on through the water, coursed for our cove.

It had been a near thing, so near that my head had whipped close to a shark's snapping jaw, slamming shut like some gigantic trap scarcely more than a foot away; and so finely and closely had Pellafino timed and judged her turn and speed, that I found myself

only just able to hang on with every last ounce of my rapidly depleting strength.

Nevertheless, hang on I did, instinctively, almost perhaps a little selfishly; for I knew well enough that Pellafino alone could have doubled her speed and manoeuvrability, and easily evaded the comparatively clumsy tactics of the three sharks. But I was only a child, excited and strung taut, hardly knowing myself as I clung to my dolphin, salted by the sea and quenched in fear, governed in those moments by little more than an innate need for self-preservation. Thus these scenes scarred themselves indelibly on my mind for many years, so that I was unable to be at peace with myself until, at length, I recognized the firm hand of destiny and my own innocent part in the final tragedy.

In fact it would have been an act only of silly bravado to have let go my hold on Pellafino, since most certainly would she have turned back to save me if she could, with no chance of success, and with her sacrifice and death lying empty and unfulfilled on my heart and conscience.

For a while Pellafino stopped her Asdic-like squeaking, and in silence we sped over and under the sea towards the shore and our cove. At the speed we were thrusting aside the waves I dared not even glance over my shoulder, for to have done so would have broken my streamlined undulations, and put such intolerable strain on my grip from the added pressures of sea and whipping spray, that my strength — already jarred and strained to its limit — could never have coped, and I would have been torn away from Pellafino.

Although I knew I could rely completely on

Pellafino's use of her great intelligence and highly developed sensory skills to their best effect, yet I could not conceive how we could possibly reach our cove, at least unscathed, and even if my ailing strength could hold out. As it was I was finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate my long over-stressed faculties on keeping my grip, and still maintaining the finesse of rhythm and grace in flow and glide, knowing all the time that three sea-engines of blood and destruction were hot on our trail, and able to move considerably faster through the water than could Pellafino, burdened as she was with my dragging weight on her back.

Straight as a die we flew through and over the sharpening waves, drawing closer and closer to our cove, until we could not have been more than three hundred yards off-shore. Hope began to stir its silvery breath across my dulled mind, when Pellafino once again started up her series of rapid high-pitched squeaks, followed almost immediately by her swerving sharply to the left in a three-quarter circle, just in the nick of time as two huge slate-coloured shapes thundered past in a welter of bludgeoning water. Then, in the blink of an eye, Pellafino rippled and leaped high from the sea in a curving arc, and I saw beneath our flying bodies the third shark hurling through the waves at a tremendous pace, battering aside the rolling water, the three of them heading flat out towards the shore, and directly over the spot where we had just been swimming.

Pellafino and I were now swimming parallel to the coastline, but curving in; leaving behind us a maelstrom of thrashed water and whitened foam as the triad of sharks desperately lashed at the heavy sea,

turning as fast as they were able before streaking off once again in our pursuit.

It was a magnificent feat of combined intelligence, poise and perfect timing; a manoeuvre that must have given us at least a thirty yard jump ahead of our remorseless pursuers, though I dared not turn and look.

Had I the strength and endurance, I think that Pellafino might successfully have reached our cove; for she was clever, nimble and superbly quick-witted. However, I was to prove the weak link, since I was left with no more strength after this last gut-tearing manoeuvre; every muscle in my body screamed in agony, but none so on fire as those in my hands and arms; my battered frame could take no more, no will of mine alone could continue to command my manifest state beyond its natural limits — my hands began to slip and lose their grip.

Alas that Pellafino's great courage, sharp wits and magnificent skills were to be set at naught; or at best employed in a bloody and hopeless battle to give me time to reach the shore and save my wretched life.

"Pellafino!" I cried aloud in my anguish; "let me go — I have no more strength — save yourself!"

The words were jerked out of me, and I was at least glad I had the courage for their utterance; though in truth I must admit that they were quite unpremeditated, springing perhaps from my greater inner mind and the huge love I had for this wonderful friend of mine.

A moment later a wave's buffet knocked my loosened grip away, and I slipped ungracefully back into the wallow of Pellafino's displacement; but even as I fell, the sea closing over my head, the words — "Swim! swim hard for the shore!" rang in my mind,

and again and again until their urgency penetrated through my dulled and exhausted state.

Meanwhile, through the fine sound track of the sea, I was assailed by the most fearful noises — cracks, dull thuds, and that indescribable tearing of tortured water being pressed and lashed. My head rose to the surface, and I struck out tiredly for the shore; and as I swam I caught fleeting glimpses of a light grey shape blurring through the sea at an incredible speed, twisting and turning among the three sharks, bewildering them by buffeting the water, nulling their keen sonic instincts in the madness of Pellafino's fury.

I wept weakly as I swam, crying from sheer exhaustion and a breaking heart, knowing that Pellafino, my friend and my love, could not for long keep up such a furious contest; that soon she would have to slow down, and that the three giant sharks would then recover their sensory perceptions and fight her until she was torn to ribbons, or until I reached the shore and she would be free to break away.

This last thought filtered woozily into my mind, and then stuck firmly like a clam: I must, at any cost to myself, swim and swim and swim. The shore was less than a hundred yards away, normally a distance I could have covered within ninety seconds, but which in my present depleted condition appeared to be an almost insuperable task.

Even so, I strove with all the strength I did not have, spurred on by fear and an inflexible determination. Somehow my arms and legs pulled and kicked, the limbs separate almost from myself, clumsy and jerky; and in such fashion I flopped and floundered my way towards the shore, the heavy sea my enemy now, the broken wavelets wicked sprites dashing their cupfuls in my eyes, blinding and smarting, hindering and

irritating as I sought only to reach the nearest land — a short shingly beach fractured by rounded weed-slimed rocks, over which pounded and roared the heavy Atlantic rollers; hardly an enticing spot on which to land, but the nearest, and leaving me no other reasonable choice.

Not once did I look behind me; every yard pressed forward was one more yard gained, and every yard drawn nearer to the shore meant time for Pellafino — time, if indeed there was any left, for her to get away without any longer having to bear the weight of my safety.

This was an ordeal such as I hope never to make again; a nightmare of dark and fuzzled thoughts; one from which every movement of mine, and every wave, seared in varied distortions on my memory, slashing, scarring and tearing at my overburdened senses. In those minutes I was mad, mad with only one supremely predominant thought — 'The beach at any cost.'

At last I felt a roller stir and begin to crumple under me, and knew that I was drawing very near to the final break and rush into the hammering, skidding surf, and to the green slippery rocks as they lay obstructively scattered, firmly rooted in the foot of the cliff, exposed to view as the spent waves were sucked thirstily back into the maw of the sea, grating harshly over the slithering shingle, humping against the hard islands of granite, hastening powerlessly back to the mother ocean from which they had so recently been spewed in strength; and then, in a little while, gathered up in moulded form to pound and gnaw, bit by bit, at the adamant cliff.

But all this savage rhythm meant nothing to me in

those moments; I cared not if my body was battered to pieces, only that I could land and free Pellafino from the sharks.

A few seconds later I was being carried along almost helplessly on the crest of my last wave, rushing towards the narrow beach, rising higher and higher on its thinning peak; until I felt it shift weakly, pause, then foam and crumple as it dropped, throwing me forward and down like an arrow. Instinctively I thrust my arms out ahead of my face, hands open and ready to clutch on to anything firm, or into the shifting pebbles if there was nothing more substantial.

Fortune was with me, and I was swept straight up between the rocks on to clear shingle; then desperately holding, digging my fingers deeply between the pebbles a little above and to the left of a large encrusted boulder, greeny-blue, slimy and sharp with a hundred urchin edges.

Moments later the spent wave began its slide back to the sea, faster and faster down the steeply slanting beach; the water's weight pulling heavily at my body, dragging my hooked fingers through the shingle, then swirling and undermining them at their tips, so that I felt my grip being emptied and loosened. Without thinking, I threw myself to the right, bending so as to be caught by the rock behind me; and there I struck and clung, draped and heedless of its many needled faces, too worn to care as the suck of flouncing water pressed me heavily against my bed of little knives, rounded me and slid away.

As soon as I was free and able I scrambled feebly up the last few yards of loose shingle; then up and on to some higher rocks which, while intermittently drenched in spray, were at least beyond the main

weight and power of the waves.

I will never know how I managed to climb in time before the next roller thundered down, creamed angrily up the beach, snatched hold of my legs, and wellnigh succeeded in pulling me away had my hold not been firm. Yet, so strong is the power of will over body, that I held, and also struggled and clawed my way over the rough terrain to our cove, about twenty yards from where I had landed, then up and on to the same rock on which I had dreamed and dozed only that very morning; and while I scrambled clumsily and slowly, I projected my thoughts to Pellafino, wildly, over and over — "I'm safe, Pellafino, I'm safe! escape! swim away! save yourself now!"

My poor mind spun, for my projected thoughts were full of love and endearments; nevertheless, the essence of my message flashed to her across the ethers, however garbled and mixed their contents.

Having at last crawled painfully on to the rock I knew so well — high enough to command a fair view of the open sea over the breaking waves and haze of spray — my wretched body collapsed, twitching helplessly and refusing utterly to be driven any further. Still, I could see, and my eyes eagerly searched the heaving sea for any signs of Pellafino and the sharks.

At first I saw nothing, and my heart sank — "What had become of Pellafino? where were the three sharks? she couldn't possibly have chased them all away!"

Then my eyes were drawn to an ugly watery bulge about sixty yards from the shore, broken by the torn and bloodied body of one of the sharks as it rose jerkily to the surface, prodded upwards by the savage

cannibalistic attacks of the other two. The sight was sickening and revolting as the monsters glided swiftly upwards with open jaws, then sliced and ripped at the dead beast's tough hide with their razored teeth, tugging, tearing and worrying at great morsels of flesh until the gobbets were freed to swallow.

I followed the scene no longer than I needed to make sure that Pellafino was not with them, then scanned the sea nearer to shore, searching carefully for my beloved friend.

Once again my eyes were caught by an unusual disturbance in the water; this time no more than a gentle swirl a few yards from the entrance to our cove, caught in the surge of a wave before it broke against the rocky bastion of our trysting place; then a glimpse of Pellafino's light grey back moving slowly through the water, so slowly and weakly that the trifling cross-currents rocked her unsteadily from side to side.

Anxious and helpless, I could only watch as she glided down towards the entrance to our cove, leaving heavy trails of dark blood behind her. For a while she passed from my sight, hidden by the tunnel and barricade of rocks, before emerging from its mouth, her movements still slower, hardly able to keep afloat in her spent state.

"Pellafino!" I managed to scream, though in fact I was so completely and utterly done in myself that my voice scarcely rose above a high-pitched croak.

Yet she must have heard me, since with what was obviously a tremendous effort she rose to the surface just in front of my rock. For a long moment we looked deep into each other's eyes and souls, but spoke no word; and then with a single tired sigh she sank, her wonderful strength and great heart broken by the

hopelessly uneven battle to save my life.

My mind was numbed under this last tremendous shock, and I gazed helplessly as Pellafino's lifeless body slid down through the pellucid water, to lie quietly on the sandy floor of the pool, swaying limply to the rhythmic tune of the swinging currents.

"Pellafino," I whispered, "Pellafino, where are you?"

Then I fainted away; yet even as I passed into unconsciousness I was sensitive of a cool hand pressed lightly on my forehead, soothing and relaxing, soaking up all the murderous pain in me; and as I slipped further under her gentle caress, I felt her fresh soft lips press on to mine, while at the same time a hauntingly beautiful voice that I had come to love and know so well, breathed into my fading mind — "Don't forget, Peter, we are one, now and always; one mind, one soul, and in time one in spirit."

Then there was only black oblivion.

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"The puir wee bairn," said a kind motherly Scots voice above me, while the fingers of one of her roughened hands ran through my tangled hair. "He's hurt bad, Jock," she went on; "look here, and here, he's covered in cuts and bruises," and her fingers went on to prod me ungently, but not unkindly.

"Aye, he looks in puir shape," replied a gruff voice; "a wee bit o' battered flotsam thrown up by the sea by the look o' him."

"But a bonny lad joost the same, a've never seen a bonnier, e'en if he does look half drowned and half dead. D'ye think he'll live, Jock? He's awfu' still and quiet."

It was at this point that I rose sufficiently near to consciousness to open my eyes, although I could not focus my sight well enough to see more of my benefactors than their grey outlines.

"He's come to, lass; but only just," spoke the gruff dark voice, peering closely at me, quick to notice the tiny movements of my eyelids.

"We moost find oot his name, and where he lives; perhaps yon innkeeper knows him?" queried the motherly voice anxiously.

"What's your name, lad?" she asked, but got no reply. "Whisper into ma ear," she went on gently, when she saw I was too weak to form the words.

She bent down close to me, and I remember well the mingled sweet and sour smell of her cheap perfume and sweat. Struggling feebly against a thick blanket of darkness that weighed heavily on me, I managed to force some words through this cheerless shroud — "Robert, Robert Fogarty."

"A've got it, Jock!" she exclaimed; "his name's Robert Fogarty."

"But where does he live? we canna' joost tak' him back wi' us to the hotel."

"Where do you live, lad?" she asked of me, and waited fruitlessly, for I had not the strength to give such detailed answers as would satisfy her — indeed, at the time I could not even remember.

"Granny," I managed to say, "I live with my Granny."

"Jock, ye'll ha' to carry him up to the hotel; he says he lives with his Grannee, an' yon innkeeper's bound to know where that is."

"Wait," I gasped, and feebly clutched at the woman's dress as I remembered that I had told her something wrong.

She bent her head down again. "My real name's Peter," I whispered.

"Peter! Peter Robert Fogarty?"

"No, Peter's my real name," I whispered with the last of my strength, and began to slip away again into oblivion, though I heard the woman's voice exclaiming to her man.

"The wee bairn's off his head, Jock; says his real name's Peter, not even Peter Robert Fogarty, joost Peter; whoe'er heard o' anybody wi' two lots o' names indeed!"

And so I came back to the World; but only just, for it was touch and go for several weeks; weeks of consolidation and Pellafino — Pellafino who was never out of my mind, who was in fact a living part of me, and I of her.